NATION

Three IPS officers suspended for 'lapses' in RG Kar case probe

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Rupee breaches 96 mark in an all-time low

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

KKR fight to stay alive as GT eye top-two finish

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Petrol, diesel prices hiked by Rs 3, CNG by Rs 2

Govt says hike is minimal; Oppn claims BJP waited until polls

NEW DELHI, MAY 15 (PTI

Petrol and diesel prices were raised by Rs 3 per litre on Friday for the first time in more than four years, as surging global crude oil prices following the Iran conflict forced state-run fuel retailers to pass on part of their mounting losses after months of holding rates steady through key state elections.

The increase, which comes immediately after elections in five states, pushed petrol in New Delhi to Rs 97.77 per litre from Rs 94.77, while diesel rose to Rs 90.67 from Rs 87.67, according to industry sources. Prices vary across states due to differences in value-added tax. **In Bengaluru, petrol is now Rs 106.17 and diesel Rs 94.10;** in Mumbai, petrol stands at Rs 106.68 and diesel Rs 93.14; in Kolkata, petrol is Rs 108.74 and diesel Rs 95.13; while in Chennai, petrol has risen to Rs 103.67 and diesel Rs 95.25.

Compressed natural gas (CNG) prices were also raised by Rs 2 per kg in cities including Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, where it is now around Rs 90 per kg. However, piped natural gas used in households and domestic LPG cooking gas prices remained unchanged.

Long queues were seen at a petrol pump in Amritsar on Friday as people rushed to refuel their vehicles following the fuel price hike —*PTI*

Global crude prices have surged more than 50 per cent since US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 and subsequent disruption of flows through the Strait of Hormuz, a key global shipping route. Petrol and diesel prices are now at their highest level since May 2022.

The government said it had shielded consumers from the oil shock for over two months and implemented only a "limited and calibrated" increase of 3.2–3.4 per cent. Private retailers had already raised prices earlier.

However, Opposition said that the government waited until elections were done on five states to hile the rates.

Economists said the hike will add pressure on inflation and household budgets, with DBS Bank estimating a 15–25 basis point rise in headline inflation. Icra said oil marketing companies may still lose around Rs 500 crore daily if crude remains elevated, while Crisil pegged cumulative losses since the conflict at over Rs 1 lakh crore.

The impact is expected to directly hit the common man, with higher transport costs, rising prices of essentials, increased manufacturing expenses, and tighter household budgets.

Analysts said middle-class spending on food, travel, education, and discretionary items will be the worst hit. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Pages 2, 3 & 7*

Adani pays $18M to settle $265M US fraud case

NEW YORK/NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani has agreed to pay an USD 18 million settlement in a US civil case linked to alleged corruption, without admitting or denying wrongdoing, according to his company.

The settlement is part of a wider effort to resolve multiple investigations in the United States involving the Adani Group. People familiar with the matter said the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has settled its civil probe, while parallel investigations by the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Treasury Department are expected to conclude in the coming days.

The SEC and DoJ cases, filed in November 2024, alleged the Adanis orchestrated a USD 265 million bribery scheme involving Indian officials to secure solar energy contracts and concealed the arrangement from US investors and banks while raising funds.

Court records show the SEC on Thursday settled allegations against Gautam Adani and his nephew, Sagar Adani, tied to disclosures made to investors over solar energy projects in India. Gautam Adani agreed to pay USD 6 million, while Sagar Adani will pay USD 12 million. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 7*

The dispute centres on Bhojshala complex, which Hindus regard as an ancient temple while Muslims claim it as the Kamal Maula Mosque

HC names Bhojshala site as temple, scraps ASI's namaz order

INDORE, 15 MAY

The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Friday declared the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Dhar district to be a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, while quashing a 2003 Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) order that had permitted Muslims to offer Friday prayers at the site.

In a 242-page judgment, a division bench of Justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Alok Awasthi held that the religious character of the 11th-century monument was that of "Bhojshala with a temple of Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati)", based on archaeological and scientific evidence.

The court said the Bhojshala complex was constructed by Raja Bhoj in 1034 AD as a Sanskrit learning centre and temple, much before claims regarding the construction of a mosque. It also declared the site a protected monument under the 1958 Act with retrospective effect from March 3, 1904.

The ruling nullifies the ASI's April 2003 order under which Hindus were allowed worship on Tuesdays and Muslims permitted namaz on Fridays. The bench directed the ASI to take full supervisory control over preservation, conservation and regulation of religious access at the site.

The court also said the Centre may consider representations seeking the return of the idol of Goddess Saraswati from a museum in London for reinstallation at the complex.

At the same time, the High Court asked the Madhya Pradesh government to consider allotting suitable land in Dhar district to the Muslim community for construction and administration of a mosque.

The Muslim side said it would challenge the verdict in the Supreme Court. Counsel Ashar Warsi said they were "not satisfied" with the judgment, while Shahar Qazi Waqar Sadiq also indicated an appeal would follow after reviewing the full order.

The court criticised the ASI for "dereliction of duty" and relied on a 98-day scientific survey that concluded the structure was built using components of an earlier temple. The judgment also referred to principles laid down in the Ayodhya verdict while assessing archaeological evidence. —*PTI*

FOUR KILLED IN VIJAYAPURA ROOF COLLAPSE AMID HEAVY RAIN

VIJAYAPURA, 15 MAY

Four members of a family were killed after the roof of an old rented house collapsed during heavy rain accompanied by strong winds in Karnataka's Vijayapura district, police said on Friday.

The deceased were identified as Gurunath Badigera, 35, his wife Jyoti Badigera, 28, and their two children, Kalamma, 13, and Kirti, 9. The incident took place at Moratagi village in Alamela taluk on Thursday night.

According to police, the family had recently moved into this rented house while repair work was underway at their own residence. All four were asleep when the roof suddenly collapsed.

Personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services Department and police rushed to the spot and carried out rescue operations to recover the bodies. Karnataka BJP State President BY Vijayendra urged state government to identify dilapidated houses across the State and ensure preventive action to avoid such tragedies. —*Salar News*

Rescue personnel and locals clear debris after a house roof collapsed during heavy rain and strong winds Vijayapura on Friday—*PTI*

SC to hold virtual hearings twice a week

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The Supreme Court has announced it will conduct hearings exclusively via video conference on Mondays and Fridays, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to conserve fuel amid the West Asia crisis. The Court will adopt a hybrid mode from Tuesday to Thursday, allowing lawyers and litigants to appear physically or virtually. All Monday and Friday hearings will be online. Judges have "unanimously resolved" to promote car-pooling among themselves to optimise fuel use. Up to 50 per cent of staff may work from home twice weekly, subject to weekly rosters and operational needs. —*SALAR NEWS*

SC sets aside HC order suspending Sengar's life term

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Supreme Court on Friday set aside a Delhi High Court order suspending the life sentence of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case and asked it to decide the plea afresh. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also asked the high court to make endeavours to decide the main plea of Sengar against his conviction and life imprisonment in the case within two months. It also said that if it was not possible for the high court to decide the main plea expeditiously, it should pass an order on a plea of Sengar seeking the suspension of his life term before the start of the summer vacation. The bench, which had earlier set aside the high court order granting bail to Sengar after a huge public uproar over the issue, said that it did not express any opinion on the merits of the case. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 4

UAE TO INVEST $5B IN INDIA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on Friday —*PTI*

India, UAE ink defence deals, bat for peace

ABU DHABI, 15 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said India is ready to extend "all possible support" to bring peace in West Asia, during talks with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi, where both countries signed major agreements in defence, energy and technology.

The two sides signed a framework for a strategic defence partnership aimed at deepening defence industrial collaboration and cooperation in advanced technology, innovation, military training, joint exercises, maritime security, cyber defence, secure communications and intelligence sharing, according to an official statement.

The meeting took place shortly after Modi arrived in the United Arab Emirates on the first leg of his five-nation tour. The UAE stopover lasted around two-and-a-half hours before the Prime Minister departed for the Netherlands.

During the talks, Modi condemned attacks on the UAE and praised Abu Dhabi's handling of the situation amid escalating tensions in West Asi. He said that the regional conflict was having global impact.

The UAE also announced investments worth USD 5 billion in India.

In a special gesture, Modi's aircraft was escorted into UAE airspace by a formation of F-16 fighter jets of the UAE Air Force, which the Prime Minister described as an honour for India.

Following the UAE visit, Modi is scheduled to travel to the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy. —*PTI*

India, UAE to build crude & gas reserves

>>>*More on Page 3*

SW monsoon likely to enter India on 26 May, says IMD

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced on Friday that the southwest monsoon is expected to arrive early over Kerala on 26 May, with a model error of ± 4 days. Normally, the monsoon begins in Kerala around 1 June and moves northward across India. Last year, it started on 24 May.

The IMD stated that conditions are favourable for the monsoon to advance within the next 24 hours.

The onset of monsoon in Kerala marks the transition from the hot, dry season to the rainy season (June to September). —*PTI*

NEET re-exam on 21 June; to shift to online from 2027

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday announced that the NEET-UG re-examination will be held on 21 June, and said the medical entrance exam will be a computer-based test from next year onwards as part of reforms, in view of allegations of irregularities linked to it.

There will no fee charged for the re-examination.

Addressing a press conference, Pradhan said students' future remains the government's topmost priority, adding that there will be "zero tolerance" for any irregularities found in the conduct of the NEET-UG. Strict action is being taken, he added.

Informing that the duration of the re-test has been extended by 15 minutes, Pradhan said the candidates will also get to choose their preferred test cities again and that they will get their admit cards by 14 June. The central government will also coordinate transport arrangements for the students with the state governments, he said.mThe minister said after irregularities surfaced last time, the Radhakrishnan Committee was constituted, and its recommendations were implemented. "Despite that, this incident occurred. Therefore, our first step was to cancel the examination," he said.

NEET(ug) held on 3 May was cancelled following allegations of irregularities in the examination process. —*PTI*

CBI arrests NEET paper leak 'kingpin' in Pune

>>>*More on Page 3*

CAL HC STAYS DEMOLITIONS IN MUSLIM AREAS

CALCUTTA, 15 MAY

Calcutta High Court on Friday ordered an interim stay on the demolition of alleged illegal structures in Kolkata's Topsia-Tiljala belt, questioning the manner in which the "bulldozer action" was carried out in the Muslim-majority localities.

The court's intervention came days after West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari announced audit of illegal buildings housing factories and disconnect electricity and water supply to such structures. He identified Kasba, Tiljala, Mominpore and Ekbalpore as areas facing the problem.

These areas have considerable Muslim populations.

Within hours of the announcement, authorities launched demolition drives in Tiljala, where two multi-storey buildings on GJ Khan Road were partially demolished using bulldozers and sledgehammers under. Meanwhile, reports said preparations are underway for a wider demolition drive in Siliguri. Darjeeling MP Raju Bista said nearly two dozen bulldozers had been ordered from Uttar Pradesh to accelerate the campaign. —*Agencies*

>>>*More on Page 3*

'THEY ATTACK SYSTEM'

Unemployed 'youths like cockroaches' turn activists: CJI

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY "

Likening some unemployed youngsters to cockroaches, CJI Surya Kant said on Friday that they go on to "become" the media, social media and RTI activists and attack the system.

The comments came while CJI Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was pulling up a lawyer for "pursuing" a senior advocate designation. It said there were already "parasites" in society who attack the system and asked the petitioner whether he wanted to join them.

"The entire world may be eligible to become senior (advocate), but at least you are not entitled," the bench told the lawyer.

A visibly anguished CJI observed that if the Delhi High Court would confer senior advocate designation upon the petitioner, the SC would set that aside seeing his professional conduct.

The CJI also referred to the language used by the petitioner on Facebook.

The bench also asked the petitioner whether he did not have any other case.

It said the senior advocate designation is something that is conferred on a person and is not to be pursued. It said that it wanted the CBI to verify the degrees of many people who were wearing black robes as there were doubts about their degrees.

The Bar Council of India would never do anything on this issue as they "need their votes," the SC added. The petitioner apologised and sought permission to withdraw the petition. The bench allowed it. — *PTI*

— AI

Guidelines for use of AI in medical edu soon: Govt

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Additional Chief Secretary (Medical Education) Mohammed Mohsin announced that guidelines will be released for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the Department of Medical Education. Speaking at a discussion workshop held as part of the Campus to Career – Future Ready University of Colleges summit by the Department of Higher Education at a on Friday, Mohsin said that a protocol and SOP for the use of AI is being considered for release, adding that it would benefit youth. He also said that decisions are being made on the special integration of AI across all colleges. —*SALAR NEWS*

GBA asks people to register 'dangerous' trees

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has issued a public notice to citizens to submit a 'tree felling application' for "hazardous or dilapidated" trees on their properties that pose an "imminent danger to human life and property". Any "dead or dangerous" trees and branches that fall within the GBA's jurisdiction will require the owner or occupier to obtain permission from the Tree Officer as per the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976. The notice comes weeks after seven people were killed when a tree collapsed at Bowring Hospital on 29 April. —*SALAR NEWS*

1 killed, 1 injured as bikes collide in Mysuru

MYSURU, 15 MAY

A 47-year-old chicken shop owner died and another biker suffered grievous injuries after two motorcycles collided head-on near Hullamballi Mutt in T Narasipura taluk of Mysuru on Thursday night. Police identified the deceased as Marimuttu of T Narasipura town. The injured rider, Mohan of Chikkbagilu village, was shifted to a private hospital in Mysuru. —*SALAR NEWS*

PM must resign for bungling economy: CM

After hikes, petrol in City costs Rs 106/l, diesel Rs 96/l, CNG Rs 90/kg

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday called for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resignation, holding him responsible for mismanaging the economy after the petrol and diesel price hikes.

Siddaramaiah alleged on X that the Modi government increased petrol and diesel prices "as anticipated" after the Assembly polls in four states and one union territory.

"The Modi government has once again punished the people for its own failures by increasing petrol and diesel prices by Rs 3 per litre. This is not just a price hike; it is another direct attack on the daily lives of ordinary Indians," Siddaramaiah said.

"The cost of the Union government's failed foreign policy, poor economic management, and reckless handling of inflation is now being forced on the people. Instead of protecting citizens, the Modi government is using them as a revenue source," he added.

Noting that in Bengaluru, petrol has crossed Rs 106 per litre, diesel costs around Rs 94 per litre and CNG around 90 per kg, the CM said the hike would not stop at fuel pumps. It would increase transport costs, vegetable prices, grocery bills, milk prices, construction costs, school van fees, taxi and auto fares, farm input costs, and the prices of almost every essential commodity.

"Farmers, workers, small traders, women managing household budgets, and the middle class would be hit the hardest," he added.

He said that the Modi government did not pass relief onto people when crude oil prices were low, and instead collected huge amounts of tax. But when prices rise, it immediately transfers the burden to citizens. "This is not governance; this is exploitation."

Siddaramaiah demanded a rollback on the hike, and demanded Modi's resignation for "repeatedly failing the people".

Congress leaders followed Siddaramaiah's charge.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar called the hike "Modi's gift" to people, also noting that it came after the elections.

"He (Modi) has not maintained a good relationship with anyone in the neighbourhood. Now he is asking people of the country to limit the petrol use, not to purchase gold, minimise edible oil consumption. How can it be stopped or limited," Shivakumar told reporters. "It cannot be done. The country has come to a tragic situation. We have to save it."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the fuel hike would not just increase transportation costs; it would hit milk prices, vegetable prices, farm input costs, and almost every essential commodity —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

The Modi government has failed to control inflation, failed to protect the rupee, failed to manage the economy, and failed to stand with the common man. We wish PM Narendra Modi had shown the same urgency and commitment to protect ordinary people as he shows in protecting his capitalist friends

-Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

"How can you say people should not travel outside? It is their pleasure their earnings," he added.

IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge said "Modi-nomics has failed" and noted the contradiction between Modi asking people to save petrol, while Union Minister said that there was no shortage.

"Nobody is saying we will not support the government in times of crisis. But denial is the worst possible thing you can do for citizens," he said.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said that the Centre knew this would happen, but did nothing. —*Agencies*

Post backlash, BJP mocks 'troll minister' Priyank

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

The State BJP X handle hit back at "troll minister" Priyank Kharge's criticisms over the fuel hike, claiming that while the Modi government had held fuel prices steady during multiple global crisis, the State Congress government had "taxed Kannadigas to fund its own failures".

It claimed that the Congress had hiked petrol and diesel tax in June 2024 by Rs 3 per litre and then again by Rs 2 per litre in April 2025. Alleging that there were systemic tax hikes, it said that prices for Nandini milk had increased three times since 2023. By contrast, "the Modi government held fuel prices steady for 1,460 days - absorbing the Ukraine war, OPEC production cuts, Red Sea attacks, and every global crude shock to shield Indian pumps. The Middle East crisis forced this single recalibration".

However, CM told press: "When we increased prices slightly because our prices were lower than those in other states, the BJP criticised us. But since coming to power, Modi increased fuel prices several times." —*Salar News*

'SIR will exclude SC, BC, minorities'

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday charged the SIR of electoral rolls was being rolled out to "cut" SC, BC and minorities votes. But the Congress in the State will ensure that they are "protected".

The Election Commission of India on Thursday announced the rollout of phase-3 of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in 16 states and three Union Territories involving 36.73 crore voters in a phased manner beginning 30 May.

"We are educating all the party leaders. Across the party line -- let BJP and JD(S) also secure all their votes," the KPCC President told reporters in the City. "Every one born in India should have their right."

"In Karnataka 88 to 90 per cent has been mapped (mapping of electors). But still we will try to educate all of them," he added.

NOT AFRAID OF FARMERS

On criticism from Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy about the Bidadi Integrated Township programme, Shivakumar, said that he was "not afraid" of farmers physically attacking him when opposing the land acquisition, claiming the project was for their future. He questioned why the JD(S) leader didn't denotify the land, noting that it was his project. —*Agencies*

Police wish Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on his 64th birthday at the HAL airport, Bengaluru, on Friday —*SALAR*

The primary objective of this exercise (SIR) sis to ensure that every eligible voter is enrolled, while simultaneously ensuring that no ineligible individuals are included in the voter list

-Anbu Kumar, Chief Electoral Officer

SIR schedule in Karnataka

- Covers: **5.55** crore electors
- Starts on: **20 June**
- Preparation, training and printing activities: **20-29 June**
- 59,050 BLOs will visit houses on **30 June- 29 July.**
- Notice phase, disposal of claims & objections: **5 August -3 October**
- Final roll on: **7 October**

✶ However, there are only 25,284 Booth Level Agents (BLAs) currently. Political parties should appoint more, the CEO urged.

A speeding lorry rammed into the tractor which had 19 people, causing the driver to lose control and veer off the Tungabhadra bridge near Munirabad, on Friday—*SALAR*

6 dead as tractor pushed off bridge

KOPPAL, 15 MAY

A tanker rammed into amoving tractor from behind in Koppal district, causing it to plunge off the Tungabhadra bridge on Friday, killing six members of the same family, includinga child. The impact of the collision completely crushed the tractor, creating a grim scene at the accidentsite

Thirteen others also sustained injuries and have been shifted to a nearby hospital police said,noting that the death toll may rise.

The deceased were Kenchappa,45; Mahanthesh, 18; Hulijita, 28; Bharat Manjamma, 40; Gouramma, 42; and a one-year-old minor. They were residents of Maralayanahalli village in Kudligi taluk of Vijayanagara district.

Family members and their relatives were travelling inthe tractor to offer prayers and fulfil a vow at the famous Huligamma Temple in Koppal when the tragedy struck

Koppal district Superintendent of Police Ram L Arasiddi told Salar News that there were 19 people in the tractor.

"A tanker lorrycoming at high speed from behind crashed violently into it. Due to the force ofthe impact, the tractor driver lost control, and the vehicle overturned andfell off the highway bridge," he said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced a Rs 5 lakh compensation for the family of the deceased. —*Salar News*

Darshan case: SC raps slow trial

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday directed a Bengaluru court to expedite the hearing of the Renukaswamy murder case involving actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and others. Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Darshan, noted that only 10 of the 272 prosecution witnesses have been examined in seven months.

The court noted that in the last seven months, "the progress of the trial has been very slow. The trial court must ensure witnesses are examined regularly and that hearings are not adjourned on flimsy grounds," the bench said.

The bench gave a one-year deadline, warning that it would intervene and grant bail to the actor if the trial showed no substantial progress by then. It said the trial court may proceed to examine the case on a day-to-day basis

"It is for the trial court to see that witnesses are examined on a regular basis and it is not adjourned on any flimsy ground," the bench remarked.

Darshan, along with actress Pavithra Gowda and several others, is accused of abducting and torturing Renukaswamy, 33, a fan who allegedly sent obscene messages to Pavithra. According to police, the victim was held in a shed in Bengaluru for three days in June 2024 and tortured. His body was recovered from a drain. —*PTI*

Yadgir woman, husband kill son-in-law over loan dispute

YADGIR, 15 MAY

Police in Yadgir have registered a case against a couple for allegedly killing their son-in-law over a loan dispute. The deceased, Lakshman Rao Penumurthy of Hyderabad, was staying at a hotel in Yadgir.

Police said Lakshman, a photographer, had married Mamata, daughter of Venkataratna and Varalakshmi, 18 years ago. The couple had reportedly borrowed nearly Rs 4 crore for business and had also lent money to Lakshman. Frequent disputes over repayment and pressure from creditors allegedly caused severe distress to the family. During a trip to Gokarna, creditors continued calling, after which Venkataratna reportedly broke his SIM cards and became depressed. After returning to Hyderabad, Mamata stayed there with her children, while Lakshman travelled with his in-laws to Yadgir. Mamata alleged that during an argument at the hotel, her parents suffocated Lakshman with towel and pillows. —*Salar News*

WATER WOES

Amid rising heat and chronic water shortages, children carry water in pots from a public water tank, in Bengaluru, on Friday —*SALAR*

INT'L JOINT FAMILY DAY

Joint family of 16 becomes Kolar powerhouse

KOLAR, 15 MAY

In an era where nuclear families have become increasingly common, a 16-member household in Kolar continues to uphold the tradition of joint family living while building one of the region's prominent business establishments.

Known locally as the "Anur Family," the household lives together under one roof at Gowripet in Kolar. The family home has 13 separate rooms, but a single large kitchen remains the centre of daily life, symbolising their shared values and unity.

The family consists of four brothers — Nagaraj, Subramanyam, Lakshminarayana and Raghavendra — along with their wives and children. Their journey began in 1970 when patriarch Sathyanarayana Setty opened a small hardware shop on Doddapet Road selling plumbing and hardware items.

Over the decades, the brothers expanded the venture into a major building materials business with multiple establishments across Kolar city. Each brother now plays a distinct role in managing the enterprise.

Eldest brother Nagaraj, a BCom graduate, oversees overall operations and future investments and is regarded as the guiding force behind the family business.

Subramanyam manages customer relations and public outreach, while the other brothers supervise different sections of operations.

The Anur family comprises of 16 members living in a single house—*SALAR*

Behind the smooth functioning of the family is Amrutha, the eldest daughter-in-law, who leads the household management with her co-sisters. Asha is a certified Yoga teacher, while Prabha takes care of their newly established Ceramics business. The last daughter-in-law, Sridevi, is a talented dancer who oversees domestic needs.

The younger generation too is making strides in education and professional careers, with one daughter qualifying as a Chartered Accountant. Two boys are assisting their family's business after completing their graduation while others pursue their education.

Subramanyam said misunderstandings do arise occasionally, but issues are resolved through discussion and mutual understanding.

For the family, staying together is more than tradition. Shared meals and collective decision-making remain central to their lifestyle, which they say has strengthened bonds and contributed to their prosperity over the years. —*Salar News*

—PTI

Ex-WB minister appears before ED in civic scam

KOLKATA, 15 MAY

Former West Bengal food minister **Rathin Ghosh** appeared before the ED today in connection with the civic recruitment scam after missing five summons. Ghosh reached the ED office at CGO Complex in Salt Lake around 10 am and stated he was unaware of the reason behind the summons. He said, "I do not know why I have been called. I will know once I go inside," before entering. The ED had summoned him during the election period, but he did not appear, citing political commitments. Officials are expected to question him regarding allegations of recruitment in civic bodies in exchange for money. This follows the arrest of former fire services minister Sujit Bose in the same case after prolonged questioning and multiple summons. *—PTI*

—PTI

Seniormost Assam MLA sworn in as pro-tem Speaker

GUWAHATI, 15 MAY

The first session of the newly elected 16th Assam Assembly will commence on 21 May at 9.30am in Dispur, the Assembly Secretariat announced. The order from Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya was issued on Thursday, summoning the session. Chandra Mohan Patowary, BJP's senior-most MLA, was sworn in as pro-tem Speaker by the governor. He will administer the oath to new MLAs, and the session will continue until 26 May. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma confirmed the four-day schedule, with plans to elect the new Speaker. The NDA government, with a two-thirds majority, retained power, winning 92 seats. Sarma stated, "The governor will also address the House on the first day." *—PTI*

Araghchi: India can play 'greater role' for West Asia peace

Tells BRICS, friendly nations can cross Hormuz

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said India can play a greater role in promoting peace in West Asia during the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, stressing that regional conflicts cannot be resolved militarily and must be settled through negotiations. He said Iran would welcome any constructive role by India in supporting regional stability.

Speaking on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting, Araghchi said India's foreign policy choices are sovereign and it is for New Delhi to decide its relations with other countries, including the UAE. He said Iran places priority on its ties with India and supports continued strong engagement and cooperation between the two countries.

He said Iran is prepared to ensure safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, describing the situation as complex but reaffirming Tehran's responsibility for maritime security. In talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, he said friendly nations can rely on Iran for the safety of commerce and broader regional stability.

Iran Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting, in New Delhi *—PTI*

On nuclear negotiations with the United States, Araghchi said talks are facing a trust deficit and have reached a temporary deadlock over enriched uranium, while Iran maintains its programme is peaceful and does not seek nuclear weapons. He said consultations may continue with Russia and noted that Pakistan's mediation efforts have not failed. He also highlighted the Chabahar Port project as an important connectivity link for India to Central Asia, the Caucasus and beyond.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called for reform and expansion of the UN Security Council, saying its effectiveness and credibility are constrained without change. He said global governance structures have not kept pace with a multipolar world. He urged expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories, along with wider reforms to the international financial architecture and strengthening of a WTO-centred trading system. *—PTI*

TO CUSHION WAR'S IMPACT

India, UAE sign pacts on LPG, strategic oil reserves

NEW DELHI/DUBAI, 15 MAY

India and the United Arab Emirates on Friday signed a series of major agreements on strategic petroleum reserves, long-term LPG supply, defence and shipping cooperation, as both countries moved to deepen economic and energy ties amid growing instability in West Asia.

A key agreement signed between Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) aims to strengthen India's energy security through cooperation in petroleum reserves and possible collaboration in liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) storage facilities. According to an official statement, the deal will increase the UAE's participation in India's strategic petroleum reserves to 30 million barrels and support the creation of strategic gas reserves in India.

A separate agreement between Indian Oil Corporation and ADNOC will facilitate long-term LPG supply arrangements and expand opportunities in the sale and purchase of cooking gas widely used across India.

The agreements come at a time when the conflict in West Asia has raised concerns in India over potential disruptions to crude oil and gas supplies through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical route for the country's energy imports.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi *—PTI*

India and the UAE also signed a framework for a strategic defence partnership focusing on defence industrial collaboration, technology sharing, innovation and regional security cooperation. The framework includes plans to explore joint development of military hardware.

Other agreements included setting up a ship repair centre at Vadinar in Gujarat, cooperation in ports and coastal infrastructure, and skill development initiatives in ship repair. A pact was also signed between Cochin Shipyard Limited and Dubai-based Drydocks World.

The two countries further signed a term sheet for establishing a supercomputing cluster to strengthen India's artificial intelligence and high-performance computing capabilities. The Ministry of External Affairs said the UAE also committed investments worth USD 5 billion in India. The package includes potential infrastructure investments by Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and the National Infrastructure and Investment Fund, a USD 3 billion investment by Emirates NBD in RBL Bank, and a USD 1 billion investment by UAE-based International Holding Company in Sammaan Capital.

Both sides also welcomed the operationalisation of a virtual trade corridor aimed at streamlining cargo movement, reducing costs and improving supply-chain resilience. *—PTI*

My brother: Satheesan meets Chennithala

T'PURAM, 15 MAY

Kerala Chief Minister-designate VD Satheesan visited senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala on Friday at the latter's residence here and said that they are 'brothers,' as the Congress continued its attempts to please Chennithala.

Both Satheesan and Chennithala were in the race for the chief minister's post.

However, after the AICC announced Satheesan as the next chief minister, Chennithala left Thiruvananthapuram and went to Guruvayur on Thursday.

After meeting former CM Pinarayi Vijayan, Satheesan went to Chennithala's house at around 12.30 pm. He was received by the senior leader.

When asked whether Chennithala would be part of the Cabinet, Satheesan said the decision would be taken by the party.

Meanwhile, the Congress leadership continued its attempts to please Chennithala amid reports of his displeasure over the AICC naming of VD Satheesan as CM-designate.

Kerala CM-designate VD Satheesan visited Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala on Friday in Thiruvananthapuram *—ANI*

After Satheesan's visit to Chennithala's residence on Friday, the Congress general secretary in charge of Kerala, Deepa Dasmunsi, also visited the senior leader at his home.

Satheesan met his predecessor Pinarayi Vijayan too at the latter's residence here on Friday.

Vijayan and his family came out to receive Satheesan, following which the two leaders held discussions. Vijayan held Satheesan's hand as he escorted him into the house.

Kerala Congress (Jacob) chief Anoop Jacob said that UDF partners expect representation in the Cabinet.

He said talks on sharing Cabinet berths would commence at the UDF meeting on Friday. *—PTI*

Satheesan limits his convoy to 3 vehicles

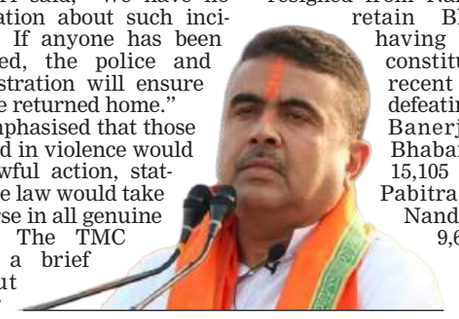
One of the first decisions taken by Kerala Chief Minister-designate VD Satheesan after being picked for the post was to limit his convoy to just three vehicles, in contrast to his predecessor's large motorcade. Congress sources said Satheesan has directed that only a pilot and escort vehicle should accompany his official car and people on the road should not be blocked. His decision is a major change from the VIP culture of ministers as well as the huge motorcade of around 10 vehicles seen when Pinarayi Vijayan used to travel. — PTI

WB Bengal CM denies post-poll violence in state

KOLKATA, 15 MAY

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari announced that his government has no information on post-poll violence alleged by opposition TMC, asserting that action would be taken after proper verification. Responding to Leader of the Opposition Sobhandeb Chatto padhyay's claims of violence displacing many across the state, Adhikari said, "We have no information about such incidents... If anyone has been displaced, the police and administration will ensure they are returned home."

He emphasised that those involved in violence would face lawful action, stating, "the law would take its course in all genuine cases." The TMC staged a brief walkout after BJP members raised slogans, but later returned. BJP MLA Rathindra Bose was elected unopposed as the first legislator from North Bengal to hold the Speaker's position, with all 207 BJP MLAs supporting him. Adhikari highlighted that proceedings would be telecast live and stressed the need for a "strong and constructive opposition," advocating shared speaking time and decorum.



Meanwhile, Adhikari resigned from Nandigram to retain Bhabanipur, having won both constituencies in recent elections, defeating Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur by 15,105 votes and Pabitra Kar in Nandigram by 9,665 votes. *—Salar News*

US team likely to visit India next month for trade

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The US team is expected to visit India next month for trade negotiations, though no specific dates have been finalised, said Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal on Friday. The Indian delegation visited Washington, DC, in April for in-person meetings to finalise details of the interim pact and advance negotiations on the broader bilateral trade agreement (BTA). Agrawal stated, "We expect the US team to visit soon... not this month... maybe next month." He added that India is engaged with the US on the trade deal, which will be signed at an appropriate time. India is also involved in discussions related to Section 301 investigations. The two countries issued a joint statement on 7 February, finalising a framework for an interim trade agreement. *—PTI*

FUEL PRICE HIKE

Election over, Modi collection begins, Oppn attacks Centre

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Opposition parties on Friday stepped up criticism of the Union government over the 3 per litre hike in petrol and diesel prices.

The parties accused the government of raising fuel prices soon after assembly elections ended, and questioned why lower global crude prices prior to the West Asia conflict were not passed on to the consumer.

"Elections over, Modi's collection begins," Congress said.

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi said the "public is paying the price for the Modi government's mistake", calling the hike only the "first instalment" and warning of further increases. He said the impact would ultimately be felt through higher transport and food inflation, affecting ordinary households across the country.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav took a swipe at the government's fuel conservation messaging, sharing a satirical post suggesting the bicycle as the only viable alternative for citizens.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay termed the hike "unacceptable" and demanded its rollback, alleging that oil marketing companies do not pass on global price reductions to consumers and instead increase rates after elections. "The hike has been effected after the 'five-state polls' (four states and one Union Territory)," he said, linking the revision to the recent electoral cycle.

AIADMK leader Edappadi K Palaniswami said the fuel price increase would trigger a broader rise in essential commodity prices, as diesel costs directly impact transport and logistics. He urged Centre to reduce petrol, diesel and cooking gas prices. *—Salar News*

India kept price hike at just 3% amid global surge, retorts BJP

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

BJP on Friday defended the recent increase in fuel prices, stating that India had shielded consumers from a global oil shock for over two months and implemented only a "limited and calibrated" hike compared with other major economies.

In a post on X, BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya said India recorded one of the lowest fuel price increases globally, with petrol rising 3.2 per cent and diesel 3.4 per cent. He said the Rs 3 per litre hike announced on 15 May was effectively the first increase in nearly four years, translating to about a 3.5 per cent rise on a base price of around Rs 95 per litre.

Malviya said public sector oil marketing companies absorbed a significant portion of rising crude costs for 76 days after the West Asia crisis escalated, despite under-recoveries nearing Rs 1,000 crore per day. He added that Brent crude remained above USD 100 per barrel for most of April and May due to disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz.

He claimed India was a "notable exception" globally, with several countries experiencing far higher increases. According to him, fuel prices rose by nearly 55 per cent in Pakistan and over 56 per cent in Malaysia, while the United States saw an increase of around 45 per cent.

He also said diesel prices rose between 50 and 100 per cent in several economies, while Saudi Arabia remained unchanged due to subsidies.

BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari accused the Congress of political opportunism. *—PTI*

Long queues were seen at a petrol pump in Amritsar on Friday as people rushed to refuel their vehicles following the fuel price hike *—PTI*

PROTEST OVER MSP

Cops use water guns, tear gas to disperse Punjab farmers

Cops use water cannons on farmers in Chandigarh

CHANDIGARH, 15 MAY

Chandigarh police employed tear gas and water cannons on Friday to disperse protesting Punjab farmers attempting to march to Lok Bhavan to submit a memorandum to Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria. The farmers, under the banner of the Samyukt Kissan Morcha (SKM), demanded a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP), resolution of the water dispute, and repeal of certain provisions of the Punjab Reorganisation Act.

A large group from Punjab gathered at Mohali-Chandigarh border, but when some farmers jumped barricades and a protester tried to push a tractor, police responded with water cannons and tear gas, detaining some farmers. SKM leaders, including Joginder Singh Ugrahan, claimed injuries in police action. Following the incident, senior SKM leader Balbir Singh Rajewal announced that farmers will burn effigies of the Punjab Governor and BJP across Punjab on Saturday. A meeting will be held on 21 May to decide further actions. A woman protester said, "Chandigarh is also Punjab's capital, but today we were stopped from even handing a memorandum to the Governor." *—PTI*

VCK OPPOSES AIADMK REBELS AS MINISTERS

CHENNAI, 15 MAY

VCK general secretary D Ravikumar objected to the idea of appointing breakaway AIADMK legislators as ministers in the Vijay-led TVK cabinet and said the issue raised serious questions of political morality.

He contended that Edappadi K Palaniswami, as the general secretary of AIADMK, had the authority to appoint the party Whip and the latter's orders were binding on the party's MLAs.

Consequently, the 25 MLAs who voted in favour of the government, against the party's direction, were liable to face disqualification proceedings under the Tenth Schedule, the VCK MP said on 'X.'

His remarks come in the backdrop of Palaniswami's claim that the }AIADMK faction had supported the Vijay-led TVJK government during its floor test, due to the "lure" of minister posts, a charge denied by the rebel leaders.

The VCK with two MLAs, along with the Left and the IUML, has extended support to the TVK. *—PTI*

—FREEPIK

MP invokes NSA against firecracker factory manager

DEWAS/INDORE, 15 MAY

Madhya Pradesh authorities on Friday invoked the National Security Act against firecracker factory manager Ajaas Khan after a blast in Dewas district killed five labourers and injured 23 others. Licensed owner Anil Malviya was earlier arrested under the stringent law, and both men have been ordered lodged in Ujjain Central Jail for three months. Police also booked Malviya, Khan, manager Mahesh and contractor Bhupendra alias Chhotu for culpable homicide and explosives offences. Investigators alleged excessive explosive material was stored without proper safety arrangements. Three critically injured victims remain under treatment in Indore. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced compensation and free medical care for all injured labourers. —*PTI*

—ANI

HC bins contempt plea against Shankaracharya

PRAYAGRAJ, 15 MAY

The Allahabad High Court on Friday rejected a contempt petition seeking action against Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati and his disciple Mukundanand Brahmachari over alleged disobedience of a court order linked to a POCSO case. Applicant Ashutosh Brahmachari Maharaj claimed the seer violated conditions imposed while granting anticipatory bail by holding meetings and making public statements. Rejecting the plea, Justice Pathak said that the applicant could instead seek cancellation of anticipatory bail if any conditions were breached. Earlier, Justice Agarwal recused himself from hearing the matter, stating he did not wish to hear the case, after which the CJ reassigned it proceedings to another judicial bench. —*PTI*

Boy suffers electric shock at home, attack suspected

T'PURAM, 15 MAY

Police are investigating an alleged attempt to injure a woman and her two children after a live wire was found connected from a meter box to the handle of their front door near Marayamuttom. The incident occurred when the elder child attempted to open the door, suffered an electric shock and was injured. Police said the boy exited through the back door, discovered the wire attached to the handle and alerted his uncle. The uncle disconnected the power and informed the police. Investigators are recording the statements of the family. No suspects have been identified so far. —*PTI*

ATS nabs Nagpur man over IED found at Pune

PUNE, 15 MAY

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested a man in his late 20s from Nagpur in connection with an improvised explosive device (IED) found at Usha Kiran Hospital in Hadapsar. An ATS officer stated that the suspect, a resident of Pune's Manjari area, was on the run following the incident. "We found an empty box of a timer used in the IED at his shop. We are questioning him and trying to determine if others were involved," he said. The device, containing low-grade explosives, was discovered in a hospital washroom on Wednesday evening and was later disposed of by the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad.—*PTI*

SC bins order suspending Sengar's lifer

Delhi HC told to examine afresh Sengar's plea against his conviction in Unnao rape case

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court set aside a Delhi High Court order suspending the life sentence of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case and asked it to decide the plea afresh.

CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also asked the high court on Friday to decide the main plea of Sengar against his conviction and life imprisonment within two months. It also said that if it was not possible for the high court to decide the main plea expeditiously, it should pass an order on a plea of Sengar seeking the suspension of his life term before the beginning of the summer vacation.

The bench, which had earlier set aside the high court order granting bail to Sengar after a huge public uproar over the issue, said that it did not express any opinion on the merits of the case and the high court could proceed with it afresh and hear all parties, including the victim.It asked the parties not to seek adjournment of the hearing on the appeal of Sengar before the high court. The SC was hearing a CBI appeal challenging the suspension of the former MLA's lifer ordered by the HC.

The Supreme Court bench said that it did not express any opinion on the merits of the case and that the HC can proceed with it afresh—*PTI*

It noted that the HC dealt with several issues while deciding Sengar's plea for suspension of sentence. Observing that it has not expressed any opinion on the merits of the case, the bench asked the HC to decide afresh the plea for suspension of sentence.

The CJI also asked the HC to decide afresh issues like whether an MLA can be treated as a public servant for being prosecuted under POCSO. Earlier, the SC had deferred to the first week of May the hearing on the petition filed by the CBI challenging the suspension of Sengar's life imprisonment.

The Unnao rape case refers to the gangrape of a 17-year-old girl on 4 June 2017 in UP's Unnao. On 16 December 2019, former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was convicted of the rape, and on 20 December 2019, he was given a lifer. He was also found guilty in the death of the girl's father in judicial custody.

Citing police inaction in the rape case and her father's arrest on false charges, the rape survivor attempted to immolate herself at the residence of Yogi Adityanath on 8 April 2018. Her father died in judicial custody shortly thereafter. — *PTI*

SC REFUSES TO ALLOW MINING IN ARAVALLI

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday said it won't pass any order in favour of mining leaseholders for now as it has been getting "disturbing" feedback regarding mining in the Aravalli Range.

The SC said there were specific ecological issues and in February it had asked the environment ministry and other stakeholders to suggest names of domain experts for a panel to define the Aravalli hills and ranges.

"We will not hear this matter in a piecemeal (manner). We will not permit any activity unless we are fully satisfied," Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said.

The SC is hearing a suo motu case titled "In Re: Definition of Aravalli hills and ranges and ancillary issues."

The bench told the lawyer who mentioned the matter if any mining lease is cancelled, the concerned party may challenge it.

"We will not pass any order in favour of the mining lease holders now. This is a sensitive matter," the bench said.

On 20 November 2025, the SC accepted a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges and banned the grant of fresh mining leases inside its areas spanning Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat until experts' reports are out. — *PTI*

WAR MUSEUM

At the 10,269 ft Sadhana Pass in J&K, Lt Gov. Sinha inaugurated an Integrated Transit Facility and the Shaurya Gatha war museum. The pass was renamed after actor Sadhana after her 1965 visit. The checkpoint aims

Centre must rationalise airfares, says SC

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court said on Friday that there should be some rationalisation of airfares and asked the Centre to provide relief to flyers.

Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said that on the same day, one airline flying in the same sector charges a particular airfare while other charges a different airfare.

"On the same day for flights in the same sector one airline charges Rs 8,000 while another charges Rs 18,000 for economy class," the bench told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre.

Justice Mehta said, "There should be some rationalisation" after the SG said that a 2024 enactment has come into effect.

Mehta said the government was not disputing the problem and is treating the issue as non-adversarial.

The bench was hearing a plea filed by social activist S Laxminarayanan, who sought a independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector and regulatory guidelines to control the "unpredictable fluctuations" in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India.

Senior advocate Ravindra Srivastava, appearing for Laxminarayanan, submitted that rules already exist under the Aircraft Act of 1937 but they were not followed. He said till the new rules are framed, the old rules will continue and it says that if the DGCA is satisfied that airlines are charging predatory fares it will issue directions.

The bench posted the matter for hearing on 13 July. — *PTI*

SC ALLOWS EARLY RELEASE OF POET MADHUMITA'S MURDERER

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Observing that reformation should be the focus of the State and not retribution, the Supreme Court allowed a plea seeking premature release of one of the convicts in the 2003 murder case of 26-year-old poet Madhumita Shukla.

Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan set aside the order of the Ministry of Home Affairs dated 9 July 2025 rejecting the Uttarakhand government's recommendation for the premature release of convict Rohit Chaturvedi.

The SC noted that Chaturvedi had spent 22 years in jail without remission. Pregnant Madhumita was shot dead on 9 May 2003 in Lucknow's Paper Mill Colony. — *PTI*

31 Naga, Kuki hostages released in Manipur

IMPHAL, 15 MAY

Thirty-one of the 38 people belonging to the Kuki and Naga communities, who were held hostage by armed groups in Manipur's Kangpokpi and Senapati districts, were released, police said on Friday.

These people were taken to unknown areas after suspected militants shot dead three church leaders and injured four others in Kangpokpi on Wednesday, while a civilian was gunned down and his wife was wounded in Noney district.

"Twelve Naga women from Konsakhul village, who were held captive by armed militants, were released at Makhan village," a senior officer said.

Four men and 10 women of the Kuki community, who were held in captivity in Senapati district, were handed over to security forces late Thursday night, he said.

The officer also said, "Two Salesian brothers of Don Bosco, including one from Nagaland, were also released by the armed groups at different locations."

On Thursday, three persons, including an 18-year-old woman, belonging to the Kuki community, were handed over to the police teams in Senapati district, another officer said.

"We were blindfolded and our hands tied up. We did not know the locations where we were taken to. I could sense that we were taken to hilly areas. No one has assaulted us," said a woman who was released in Kangpokpi district. People from the Kuki and Naga communities had on Thursday held separate sit-ins in the Kangpokpi district to protest against the alleged abductions. — *PTI*

Kukis and Nagas release 28 people, 14 each from either side, in Makhan village. They were detained by their adversaries after a clash in April this year. —ANI

CBI nabs NEET leak 'kingpin'

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The CBI claimed on Friday that it had cracked the NEET paper leak case with the arrest of a Pune-based professor, the "source" of the question paper leak.

Professor PV Kulkarni, a domain expert in chemistry from Latur who served on panels involved in setting the NEET question paper, was taken into custody from his residence in Pune, officials said. Exploiting his privileged access to confidential material, Kulkarni hosted coaching classes at his house in the last week of April and dictated to his students questions which appeared in the NEET UG paper on 3 May.

"During the last week of April 2026, he had mobilised students, with the help of another accused Manisha Waghmare who was arrested on 14 May by the CBI," the spokesperson said in a statement.

Students allegedly paid several lakhs to attend the sessions where they wrote the questions down in their notebooks which later "tallied exactly" with the actual NEET-UG paper conducted on 3 May, the CBI spokesperson said.

CBI teams probing the case found the actual source of the leakage of the chemistry question paper, as well as the middlemen involved in mobilising the students who paid several lakhs to attend the special coaching classes where these question banks were dictated, she said.

"In the last 24 hours, CBI has also conducted searches at several locations across the country and seized several incriminating documents, electronic gadgets and mobile phones," the spokesperson said.

A detailed forensic analysis of the seized items is on, she said. — PTI

CCPA FINES 2 COACHING INSTITUTES RS 15L FOR MISLEADING ADS

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The CCPA has imposed fines of Rs 10 lakh and Rs 5 lakh on Motion Education Pvt Ltd and Career Line Coaching (CLC) of Sikar for publishing misleading advertisements about JEE and NEET results.

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) said that the advertisements published by the two institutes concealed crucial information about the courses attended by students whose success stories were featured by them.

CCPA Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare and Commissioner Anupam Mishra, found that both institutes had violated the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. Motion Education had advertised a 91.2 per cent NEET success rate and a 51.02 per cent IIT-JEE Advanced pass rate.

The probe revealed that most of the featured students had enrolled in "I-Eklavya (Online)" — a course offered free of cost to some students selected through a test and interview. None of the ads mentioned this. — PTI

Drones & UAS are claws in the sky, says IAF chief

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh said on Friday that drones and other unmanned aerial systems (UAS) considered an extension of air power, are no more just eyes in the sky, but are now akin to "claws in the sky."

In his address at a seminar on unmanned aerial systems and counter-UAS, he asserted that in any modern aerial threat, complete domain awareness is the key, and there should be "complete coordination" among the three services operating in the same air space.

"We have seen what happens if you don't have domain awareness, you don't know where your people are and where others are. We've seen what happened to US F-15s in Kuwait. So we cannot afford to have things like that," the IAF chief said, referring to the recent incident that took place during the West Asia conflict.

On 1 March, three US F-15E Strike Eagles went down over Kuwait due to friendly fire, the US CENTCOM had said in a statement on 2 March.

The seminar is being co-hosted by think-tank Centre for Aerospace Power & Strategic Studies (CAPSS) and Indian Military Review (IMR) publication, at the IAF's Subroto Park here.

"Drones and unmanned aerial systems (UAS), and counter-unmanned aerial systems (UAS), are very relevant today. It is a reality. It is not something for the future," the IAF chief said.

"So, there is no denying that the battlefield has shifted. We are shifting totally from those concentrated air power to a sort of decentralised and autonomous way," he added. The air chief marshal underlined that the UAS is an "extension of air power." —PTI

'MISUSE OF AUTHORITY'

Three IPS officers suspended for 'lapses' in RG Kar case probe

KOLKATA, 15 MAY

The West Bengal government suspended three senior IPS officers for alleged mishandling and dereliction of duty during the initial phase of the investigation into the RG Kar hospital rape-murder case, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said.

Announcing the decision at the secretariat on Friday, Adhikari said the suspension of former Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal, and ex-deputy commissioners Indira Mukherjee and Abhishek Gupta, was ordered in the context of a departmental probe launched against them.

The chief minister said the three officers were allegedly involved in the "mishandling" of the case, "offering money to the victim's parents as a bribe" and addressing an "unauthorised press conference" in connection with the gruesome crime, which took place in August 2024.

The CM said the allegations of the victim's family that police officers had attempted to offer them money in the name of the state government needed to be probed. The CM said that disciplinary proceedings would be spearheaded by the home secretary under the chief secretary's supervision.

Hailing the West Bengal government's decision to widen the investigation into the RG Kar rape-and-murder case and suspend three senior IPS officers, the victim's parents said on Friday that the move revived their hopes for justice.

The victim's mother, **Ratna Debnath**, now the BJP MLA from Panihati, said the latest developments marked the beginning of a renewed judicial process. — *PTI*

Ex-judge's son's wife kills self months after wedding

BHOPAL, 15 MAY

A 31-year-old woman from Noida was discovered hanging at her husband's residence in Bhopal, news agency PTI reports. Tvisha Sharma, the daughter-in-law of a retired judge, was found dead at her home in the Katara Hills area on Tuesday night. Police said Tvisha met Bhopal lawyer Samarth Singh through a dating app in 2024, and they married in December 2025.

Katara Hills police station in-charge Sunil Kumar Dubey told PTI that the case is under investigation, with her maternal family alleging her in-laws of murder. Police confirmed Tvisha was found hanging in her matrimonial home; her husband and mother-in-law took her to hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

The police received information about the incident around 11pm. Her maternal family claimed she was in contact with them over the phone until 10pm that day and wanted to leave Bhopal to return to Noida. No suicide note was recovered from the scene, and the investigation has been handed over to Assistant Police Commissioner Rajnish Singh. —*PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

‘Safaris stressing India’s tigers, affecting breeding’

India’s booming wildlife tourism is putting mounting biological pressure on tigers and altering where they breed, a major new study by the CSIR–Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, warns.

The two year investigation, led by senior scientist G. Umapathy, tracked stress and reproductive patterns in tigers across five of India’s leading reserves and found that increasing human activity, especially safari tourism, is significantly affecting tiger behaviour and wellbeing. Researchers monitored animals through four seasons between 2020 and 2023 in Corbett (Uttarakhand), Tadoba Andhari (Maharashtra), Kanha and Bandhavgarh (Madhya Pradesh) and Periyar (Kerala).

In a departure from many earlier field studies, the team used non invasive hormone analysis to assess stress and reproductive health. They genetically confirmed 610 tiger scat samples, including 291 from females and 185 from males, and tested them for two hormone markers: faecal glucocorticoid metabolites (indicators of stress) and faecal progesterone metabolites (signalling breeding activity in females).

The results, the authors say, are striking. “Across all reserves, tigers ranging close to tourism roads and in areas with greater human disturbance consistently showed elevated stress hormone levels,” CCMB said in a statement. Perhaps most surprisingly, tigers within strictly protected core zones displayed sharper stress responses to tourism related disturbances than those in multi use buffer zones.

The researchers suggest a habituation effect: buffer zone tigers have become accustomed to continuous human presence, while tigers in core areas — typically quieter and intended as refuges — experience sudden stress spikes when seasonal tourism penetrates previously undisturbed habitats. This pattern was particularly visible in Tadoba and Bandhavgarh.

On 7 April, a video from Ranthambore Park showed a tiger surrounded by safari jeeps, with tourists crowding close to its path and filming as the animal appeared stressed and had limited space to move. (Bottom right) On 26 April, another video from the same park showed two tigers engaged in a territorial face-off, while several safari vehicles gathered very close to the scene —SCREENGRAB

Worryingly, the study also links elevated stress to reduced reproductive success. “Tigresses prefer breeding in quiet parts of forests. However, it is becoming difficult to find such suitable areas,” said Umapathy, Chief Scientist at CSIR CCMB. The team found that stressed female tigers were less likely to reproduce, and noted that cubs born under chronically disturbed conditions may develop differently, with potential long term consequences for population health.

If tourism pressures continue unchecked, researchers warn, tiger populations could retreat into ever shrinking core habitats. That crowding may increase territorial conflict, with dominant males fighting over limited space, a trend already visible in parts of central India.

The principal stressor identified by the study was overcrowding during wildlife safaris. In many reserves, researchers observed 30 to 40 safari vehicles surrounding a single tiger sighting. Vehicles can trap animals, produce heavy noise and use camera flashes, forcing tigers to hide for hours and disrupting feeding, resting and social behaviours. Popular tourism routes are often built around waterholes, compelling animals to choose between accessing water and avoiding human disturbance.

The pressure is acute in some of India’s most famous tiger parks. Jim Corbett National Park, which now has the world’s highest density of tigers, permits up to 180 safari vehicles daily in its busiest zones. Tiger numbers there rose from 231 in 2018 to 319 in the 2022 All India Tiger Estimation, prompting scientists to conclude that the park has effectively exhausted its natural carrying capacity. Corbett’s tigers are increasingly moving beyond park boundaries into villages and agricultural land, intensifying human wildlife conflict and incidents of retaliatory poisoning or poaching.

Bandhavgarh presents a similar dilemma. Its reputation for reliable sightings has created chronic tourist congestion despite recent restrictions by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). Tiger counts climbed from 61 in 2018 to 165 in 2022, and researchers estimate the reserve now supports more than 200 tigers within about 1,538 square kilometres, producing intense spatial pressure. Madhya Pradesh recorded 55 tiger deaths in 2025, many linked to territorial fights , and a further 28 deaths were reported in the first five months of 2026.

Kanha National Park averages around 140 safari vehicles daily on core tourism routes. Although resident tiger numbers have remained near 105, the study warns that tourism related stress may be undermining their health; in early 2026 a tigress and her four cubs died within nine days in an incident suspected to have been exacerbated by stress amplified disease.

Tadoba Andhari has perhaps experienced the sharpest transformation. Tiger numbers rose rapidly from about 15 in 2010 to 97 in recent counts, turning the reserve into a premier safari destination. The surge has brought crowds that frequently blockade tigers at roadside waterholes during the dry season, and tigers dispersing into buffer zones have faced fatal encounters with humans. Many deaths result from electrocution, traps and retaliatory attacks by villagers.

The NTCA reports a worrying rise in tiger fatalities nationwide: 166 deaths in 2025, up from 126 in 2024. Historical records from 2012–25 show that 52.5 per cent of tiger deaths occurred within protected reserves, with the remaining 47.5 per cent outside reserve boundaries in forest divisions and wildlife corridors, underlining that conservation areas are not immune to rising pressures.

The CCMB team stresses that it is not arguing against wildlife tourism, which remains a vital source of conservation funding and rural employment. Instead, the researchers urge that tourism regulation be guided by the animals’ physiology. “The way tourism is regulated, vehicle numbers, safari timings, road density and the protection of breeding areas, must be informed by what the animals are actually telling us through their physiology,” Umapathy said.

The study recommends stricter caps on safari vehicle numbers, shorter safari durations, stronger buffer zone management and the creation of alternative water sources away from tourist routes. It also calls for continuous non invasive monitoring of tigresses to identify and protect sensitive breeding hotspots. —*Salar News*

SALAR سالار

Menstruation is now being weaponised in war

The Tatmawdaw – the military government in Myanmar – has reportedly expanded a ban on menstrual products from being transported in the country across key routes, as part of the ongoing civil war in the country.

This targeting of sanitary pads appears to be an extension of the military’s so-called “Four Cuts” strategy, which seeks to sever resistance forces from food, funds, intelligence and recruits.

Menstrual products, it seems, have been added to that logic – and in the process stealing women’s dignity and basic human rights. While there has been no official communication about the ban, a spokeperson for local non-government organisation Sisters2Sisters says soldiers on the ground have indicated the crackdown is out of the belief that the products are being used “by the People’s Defence Force for medical reasons and as support for their feet and boots to absorb sweat and blood”.

As medical experts point out, the logic here is absurd, as sanitary pads would be a poor substitute for actual combat triage. In addition, the targeting of medical supplies during conflict is expressly prohibited under international law.

The consequence of restricting access to menstrual products is not merely one of inconvenience, and during conflict it can be especially dire.

An estimated two billion people globally menstruate. Managing periods can be demanding under the best of circumstances, and for hundreds of millions, access to menstrual products is already precarious.

Period poverty, defined as a lack of access to menstrual products, education, waste management and hygiene facilities, affects more than 500 million people worldwide. During conflict, the severity of the impact is heightened.

Limited or a lack of access to water, privacy and basic sanitation during wartime has profound impacts on women’s lives. Women in Myanmar are turning to rags, leaves and newspaper, as the costs of a pack of pads on the black market well exceeds the daily minimum wage.

Women who lack access to menstrual products find their human rights greatly restricted. Girls are less likely to access their education, and women are less likely to participate in public life when menstrual products are not available.

People seeking privacy and access to resources are at heightened risk of placing themselves in unsafe situations. Above all else, human dignity feels the impact. As one woman described it: “Food keeps us alive, but pads, soap and privacy let us live with dignity.”

The impacts of conflict on menstrual health are starkly demonstrated in Gaza. An estimated 7,00,000 people with menstrual cycles are living through the conflict, and in late 2024 it was estimated there was approximately one toilet for 486 people at best.

With a lack of access to menstrual products, the improvised alternatives included torn cloth, tissues and pieces of tent. In some of the limited aid supplies that were able to reach the area, there were reports the products were of such poor quality that they were causing infections.

Indeed, due in part to the limited options available, a UN Women’s Report from September 2024 found urinary tract infections affected more than 68 per cent of the women in Gaza they interviewed.

The laws governing armed conflict only provide limited protection. While women are deemed objects of “special respect” under international humanitarian law, the focus is squarely on women as pregnant or as mothers, or as prospective victims of sexual violence.

Ironically, this gender essentialism ignores an essential component of reproductive biology: menstruation. The cultural taboos that persist across cultures about speaking about menstruation result in it becoming an ignored part of daily life. This translates to the application of the broader civilian protections as well.

In theory, the law requires civilians to be provided with essential needs, and this language should be broad enough to encompass menstrual products. However, in reality, gender-neutral language defaults to a male perspective, and the specific needs of menstruating people go unrecognised and unaddressed. While this is slowly starting to change globally, all too often menstrual products are still treated as luxury goods rather than a basic need.

Menstruation remains an overlooked part of the consequences of conflict on daily lives. But Myanmar’s deliberate targeting of menstrual products goes a step further and renders menstruation a weapon of war.

Restricting access to menstrual products restricts movement, undermines health, and strips people of dignity. It is an insidious form of gender-based violence. And taboos around menstruation mean we don’t know how widespread this ban in Myanmar actually is. It also raises the question of how many people in other countries suffer from this targeting of such products. —*PTI*

The Myanmar civil war has triggered a massive, humanitarian refugee crisis, with over 1.3 million people displaced internally by early 2026 -UN

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

World’s ‘digital chokepoints’ at risk as Iran threatens undersea cables

The internet is often imagined as something weightless and virtual, a cloud floating above borders and politics. In reality, it depends on a vast physical network lying on the ocean floor. More than 500 undersea cables carry over 95 per cent of global international data traffic, linking continents, economies and military systems through fragile strands of fibre optic infrastructure.

This hidden architecture has now emerged as a new geopolitical fault line.

Earlier this week, Iranian state-linked media floated a proposal to charge operators of submarine internet cables for access to what Tehran claims are its offshore territories in the Strait of Hormuz. The remarks followed warnings from Iranian officials that undersea cables in the region represent a vulnerable point for Western and Gulf economies. The message was unmistakable: digital infrastructure is no longer merely an economic asset. It is strategic leverage. The West Asia hosts some of the world’s most critical submarine cable routes. Narrow maritime corridors such as the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz function not only as shipping lanes for oil and trade, but also as vital “digital chokepoints” connecting Europe, Asia and Africa.

The risks are no longer theoretical. In 2024, incidents involving submarine cables in the Red Sea disrupted nearly 25 per cent of internet traffic between Europe and Asia. Although many cable faults occur accidentally through ship anchors, fishing activity or natural causes, the growing militarisation of maritime regions has intensified fears of deliberate sabotage.

The core vulnerability lies in the concentration of infrastructure. Multiple cables are often bundled together along the same seabed routes and pass through a small number of chokepoints. This creates dangerous single points of failure. A single cable cut can affect connectivity across several regions simultaneously.

Repairing damaged cables is neither simple nor quick. Specialised repair vessels require secure access to contested waters, international coordination and considerable time. In conflict zones, even identifying the cause of disruption can prove politically explosive. The implications of a major cable disruption would extend far beyond slower internet speeds. Global connectivity itself could fragment. Regions heavily dependent on vulnerable routes could experience communica-

Multiple cables are often bundled together along the same seabed routes and pass through a small number of chokepoints. This creates dangerous single points of failure. -PTI

tions blackouts, degraded digital services and economic instability. Developing nations with limited redundancy in their networks — particularly in parts of Africa, West Asia and South Asia — would face the gravest consequences.

Financial systems are especially exposed. High-frequency trading, global banking transactions and international payment networks depend on uninterrupted, low-latency data flows. Even temporary disruptions can delay transactions, trigger market volatility and undermine investor confidence. In an interconnected global economy, digital instability in one region can rapidly create worldwide economic shockwaves. If submarine cable disruptions coincide with instability along strategic trade corridors such as the Strait of Hormuz or the Suez Canal, the effects could spill into shipping, energy markets and insurance industries, compounding global uncertainty. The military dimension may be even more serious. Modern armed forces depend on secure, real-time communications for everything from logistics planning to drone operations and command-and-control systems. Undersea cables form the backbone of these capabilities. Disruptions could impair military coordination, weaken alliance interoperability and increase the risk of miscalculation during crises.

Unlike a missile strike or a direct military attack, cable sabotage occupies a legally and politically ambiguous space. Attribution is notoriously difficult, as seen in recent cable break incidents in the Baltic Sea often linked to suspected Russian activity. Governments may struggle to determine whether a disruption is accidental, criminal or an act of war. This ambiguity itself raises the risk of escalation.

WHERE INDIA STANDS

For India, the vulnerability is particularly acute.

India’s dependence on West Asian maritime routes for internet connectivity is structural and overwhelming. Nearly 60 per cent of the country’s international internet traffic travels westward through the Arabian Sea, crossing the Gulf region and the Red Sea before reaching Europe and North America.

Critical cable systems including AAE-1, FALCON, SEA-ME-WE 4 and IMEWE pass through volatile waters near the Strait of Hormuz and Yemen. Any disruption involving Iran or Iran-backed proxy forces could severely affect India’s digital economy.

The consequences would be immediate. India, with more than 800 million internet users, relies on these routes to support everything from cloud computing to financial transactions. Significant cable outages would create internet bottlenecks, severe latency spikes and widespread service disruptions. Digital payments infrastructure would face operational stress. India’s Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which processes billions of transactions monthly, depends on stable real-time data routing. Prolonged cable outages could trigger transaction delays, processing failures and interruptions to banking services.

Cloud infrastructure would also come under strain. Major technology firms route portions of India’s cloud services and data storage through Gulf-based hubs. Previous Red Sea cable incidents already caused regional slowdowns affecting cloud platforms and enterprise networks. A larger disruption could severely impact Indian businesses, consumer applications and digital services. —*The Conversation*

PANDA PREMIERE

Indonesia's first panda cub 'Rio' enjoys a cane ahead of his public debut this month —X

2 killed, thousands affected as heavy rains lash Lanka

COLOMBO, 15 MAY

Two deaths have been reported in Sri Lanka due to persistent heavy rains, according to the disaster management centre. The fatalities occurred in Batticaloa and Jaffna districts. Over five days, eight of the country's 25 districts have been affected, with more than 4,000 people impacted and 29 families placed in two relief centres. Approximately 88 houses have been partially damaged. The weather bureau forecasts further heavy rain, with up to 150mm expected across several provinces. The low-pressure system northeast of Sri Lanka is expected to move away within 36 hours, but landslide warnings have been issued for multiple districts. —PTI

Filipino lawmaker flees senate to evade ICC

MANILA, 15 MAY

A Philippine senator wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for an alleged crime against humanity has fled the Senate, seeking refuge to avoid arrest. Sen Ronald dela Rosa left after security personnel fired gunshots during an argument with government agents, creating chaos that helped him escape. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr appealed for calm, while police investigate whether the incident was staged. Senate President Alan Cayetano said there was no obstruction of justice and did not see an ICC arrest warrant against dela Rosa, who was free to leave. Dela Rosa, a former police chief under ex president Rodrigo Duterte, faces an ICC warrant for murdering at least 32 people during a drug crackdown in 2016 and 2018. —PTI

65 killed in new Ebola outbreak in Congo: Africa CDC

KINSHASA, 15 MAY

Africa CDC on Friday confirmed a new Ebola outbreak in Congo's remote Ituri province, where 246 suspected cases and 65 deaths have been recorded, mainly in the Mongwalu and Rwampara health zones. The agency said four deaths were among laboratory-confirmed cases, while Ebola virus was detected in 13 of 20 samples tested. Africa CDC warned of a high risk of further spread due to intense population movement, mining activity, insecurity and gaps in contact tracing. The agency convened an urgent coordination meeting involving Congo, Uganda, South Sudan and UN agencies to discuss surveillance. Five months ago, 43 people died due to Ebola in Congo. —PTI

Bibi to sue NYT for reporting on rape of Palestinians

JERUSALEM, 15 MAY

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar have threatened to sue the New York Times over Nicholas Kristof's essay alleging sexual abuse of Palestinians by Israeli forces. Netanyahu called it a "hideous and distorted lie," stating they would "fight these lies in the court of public opinion and in the court of law." A Times spokesperson dismissed the threat as "without merit," emphasising Kristof's extensive, corroborated reporting on sexual violence in conflict zones. —AGENCIES

Trump, Xi hold 'successful talks' with no deals

Xi hails new vision of US-China, Don rules out bombing Iran

US President Donald Trump speaks next to Chinese President Xi Jinping during a visit to the Zhongnanhai Garden in Beijing, on Friday —PTI

BEIJING, 15 MAY

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Donald Trump on Friday hailed their talks as "historic" and "landmark", as the Republican wrapped up his three-day visit on a high note, but no deals on any contentious issues were announced.

Both Presidents, who held several rounds of talks covering a range of global issues, including the Iran war, Taiwan and bilateral trade frictions, concluded their discussions with a private meeting at Zhongnanhai, the well-guarded compound in Beijing where top leaders reside.

Trump and Xi walked and talked, occasionally stopping to admire the trees and flowers.

Trump described his trip to China as "successful and unforgettable."

"The two sides agreed on many things, made many deals, and worked out many issues," he said, according to a Chinese official readout. "Xi is my old friend. The US-China relationship is very important, and will definitely get better."

Xi said the two sides had set a "new vision" of building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability and "reached important common understandings on keeping economic and trade ties stable".

TAIWAN ROW

Xi on Thursday warned Trump that mishandling Taiwan – a sovereign nation that China claims as its own - could trigger "conflicts" between the two countries.

After departing on Friday, Trump told press aboard his Air Force One that "There's only one person that knows" if the US would deploy troops to defend Taiwan in the case of an attack. "Me".

He added that he was yet to determine if the US would approve a massive arm sale to Taipei, but would decide soon. He said he spoke "a lot" about Taiwan with Xi, who "doesn't want to go to war".

IRAN AND HORMUZ

Both countries agreed that the Strait of Hormuz should be open. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said that "There is no point in continuing this conflict, which should not have happened in the first place.".

Trump, however, said that the ceasefire in place was "favour" to Pakistan, while praising Army Chief Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and ruled out any further bombing of the Persian gulf nation.

BOEING DEAL?

Trump claimed that China agreed to buy 200 Boeing jets, even though there has been no official announcement from the company or China. —PTI

'XI MEANT US WAS DECLINING UNDER SLEEPY JOE, NOT ME'

Trump said his Xi was "100 per cent correct" in saying that the US was a "nation in decline", but the remarks were directed at former US president Joe Biden. "He was referring to the tremendous damage we suffered during the four years of Sleepy Joe Biden and the Biden Administration, and on that score, he was 100 per cent correct," Trump posted on Truth Social. But "Xi was not referring to the incredible rise that the US has displayed to the world during the 16 spectacular months of the Trump administration."

PUTIN, PAK PM SHARIF TO VISIT CHINA NEXT

The Kremlin on Thursday said that preparations for Russian President Vladimir Putin's upcoming visit to China are nearly complete, with official dates expected to be announced shortly, . Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said it "will take place very soon". Putin last visited China on 3 September for Beijing's military parade. Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif will also embark on a three day visit to China starting on 23 May.

ONLY ONE WOMAN AT THE TABLE: FORMER IMF HEAD

Former first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Gita Gopinath called out the lack of woman representation during the US-China meetings. "A painting of the end of meritocracy: A meeting of the two largest economies and not one woman at the table," she posted on X. "We have gravitated back to this idea that what matters is your network and not your capabilities".

Uncertainty looms over Starmer's future

LONDON, 15 MAY

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer faces weeks of uncertainty over his future after open rebellion erupted within the governing Labour Party following its poor local election performance.

Pressure mounted after health secretary Wes Streeting resigned on Thursday preparing for a possible leadership bid. In a stinging resignation letter, Streeting said: "Where we need vision, we have a vacuum. Where we need direction, we have drift." He also accused Starmer of failing to listen to colleagues and backbenchers.

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham declared his intention to seek the top job and is expected to contest a special parliamentary election in about five weeks after Labour MP Josh Simons resigned to make way. Former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner also emerged as a possible contender after resolving a tax issue that had forced her resignation.

Labour's internal crisis follows heavy losses in local and regional elections, with votes shifting to Reform UK on the Right and the Greens on the Left. Prolonged instability pushed Britain's borrowing costs higher, while the pound fell 1.3 per cent against the US dollar this week. —PTI

Israel's bombing of Lebanon continued on Friday, with the port city of Tyre being hit. At least 37 people were injured in the strikes, which destroyed a hospital —X @LEBOSINT

With ceasefire set to end, Israel & Lebanon hold 'productive' talks

WASHINGTON, 15 MAY

> We want to settle in Lebanon and we must not fear the pressures
>
> —Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israeli National Security Minister

Even as Israel continued to bomb Lebanon, officials from both nations held an eight-hour peace talks in the US on Thursday, the third such direct talks between the sides despite not having diplomatic relations. The three-week ceasefire between the sides is set to expire on 17 May.

US officials, including Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, mediated the talks between the Lebanon and Israeli delegations. An official from the US State Department described the talks as "productive and positive" even though there were no senior officials from either Lebanon or Israel.

Meanwhile, Israel continued to bomb Lebanon. The IDF claimed to be targeting Hezbollah operatives, while Lebanon's National News Agency stated that Israel had destroyed a hospital in the port city of Tyre, resulting in injuries. It also reported massive shelling in several towns, as Israel issued evacuations orders for five villages in southern Lebanon, where it aims to establish a "security zone". —AGENCIES

6 Hanta exposed passengers to quarantine in Aus

MELBOURNE, 15 MAY

Six passengers from a cruise ship affected by a hantavirus outbreak arrived in Australia on Friday for a quarantine period expected to last at least three weeks. The Gulfstream long-range business jet, carrying them from the Netherlands, landed at RAAF Base Pearce near Perth, Western Australia. They will be transferred to the nearby Bullsbrook quarantine centre.

Australian Health Minister Mark Butler stated that the government would enforce "one of the strongest quarantine arrangements in response to this virus outbreak you'll find anywhere in the world." The five Australians and one New Zealander are set to spend the three-week quarantine at the facility, largely unused since its construction in 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A decision on measures for the subsequent 42-day incubation period, identified by the WHO, is pending. The six passengers tested negative before leaving the Netherlands and showed no symptoms. Three of the 11 cases on the MV Hondius ship have died. —-PTI

The rescue work completed on Friday after Russian drones brought down a building in Kyiv on Thursday —UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Death toll in Kyiv after Russia's biggest attack on Ukraine rises to 24

KYIV, 15 MAY

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Friday that the Russian missile barrage on a Kyiv apartment building the previous day killed 24 people, including three teenagers.

The cruise missile hit the nine-story corner block during what the Ukrainian Air Force said was Russia's biggest barrage of the country since its all-out invasion. The building completely collapsed.

Emergency workers finished digging through the building's rubble after more than a day, Zelenskyy stated on X. The assault mostly targeted Kyiv, where 48 people were wounded, including two children.

Zelenskyy said on Thursday that Moscow had launched more than 1,560 drones against Ukrainian population centres since Wednesday. In all, some 180 sites across the country were damaged, including more than 50 residential buildings, he said.

Previously, the biggest Russian drone attack was from the evening of 23 March to the evening of 24 March when Moscow's forces fired nearly 1,000 drones and missiles at Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone attack on Ryazan, about 100km southeast of Moscow, killed four people, including a child, Governor Pavel Malkov said. After the attack, massive plumes of black smoke spewed from a fire at a local oil refinery. —PTI

CIA Director met with Raul Castro's grandson in Havana

HAVANA, 15 MAY

CIA Director John Ratcliffe met with Cuban officials including Raul Castro's grandson on Thursday at the island, Cuban and US officials said.

Ratcliffe met with Raulito Rodriguez Castro, Ministry of Interior Lazaro Alvarez Casas and the head of Cuban intelligence services on Thursday and discussed intelligence cooperation, economic stability and security issues. A CIA official confirmed the meetings to the AP.

Ratcliffe was there "to personally deliver President Donald Trump's message that the US is prepared to seriously engage on economic and security issues, if Cuba makes fundamental changes. The meeting served as a platform for Cuba to present evidence asserting that the nation poses no threat to US national security," the CIA official said.

The meeting comes as a US blockade of fuel to the island has crippled its energy infrastructure, heightening its economic woes, and leading to food spoilage as fridges don't work in the frequent blackouts.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio described Cuba's Communist government model as "broken". —PTI

'CAN'T EVEN COMPARE THE TWO'

On 78th Nakba anniversary, Palestinians say today is worse

DEIR AL-BALAH, 15 MAY

Millions of Palestinians on Friday marked the 78th anniversary of the Nakba, Arabic for "catastrophe," referring to the mass expulsion of some 7,50,000 Palestinians from what is currently Israel during the 1948 war surrounding the state's creation.

This is the third commemoration of the Nakba since the Israel's bombing campaign of Gaza, and Palestinians say that today's catastrophe is worse than one of the most defining moments in Middle Eastern history.

Gaza's more than 2 million people are now crammed into less than half of the 25-mile-long strip along the Mediterranean coast, surrounded by an Israeli-controlled zone.

An aerial view of a flattened Beit Hanoun city in the northern Gaza Strip; The exodus of Palestinians in 1948 during the 'Nakba' —X/WIKIPEDIA

"There is no country left," 78-year-old Yusuf Abu Hamam, who was an infant during the Nakba, said

For Palestinians, the Nakba meant the loss of most of their homeland. The fighting began when Arab armies attacked

after Israel was established as a home for Jews in the wake of the Holocaust. Some 80 per cent of the Palestinians who lived there were driven out.

After the war, Israel refused to allow Palestinians to return, to ensure a Jewish majority state. Palestinians became a seemingly permanent refugee community that now numbers some 6 million. Most live in camps in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Gaza.

The ancestors of Ne'man Abu Jarad and his wife, Majida avoided the original Nakba, but there was no escaping from "our Nakba." Their hometown has been wiped off the map, as Israeli bulldozers and bombs razed nearly everything in the towns and cities of Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun, and even Rafah.

"I don't think it can be compared," Majida said. "In '48, they say people were displaced once and settled in one place, and they are still there now. But our Nakba is more severe because our displacement has happened multiple times."

Around 90 per cent of Gaza's 2 million people have lost their homes, according to UN estimates, with most of them now living in tent camps with rat infestations and pools of sewage. —PTI

Israelis storm Al Aqsa Mosque, chanting death to Arabs

Tens of thousands of Israeli citizens, including National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, stormed the Al Aqsa Mosque amid chants of "death to Arabs" and "may your villages burn" during the Jerusalem Day, which marks Israel's victory during the Six-Day War in 1967 and the "occupation" of the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Height and the Sinai Peninsula.

Trade deficit widens to USD 28.38 billion as imports up 10 pc in April

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

India's merchandise trade deficit widened sharply to USD 28.38 billion in April as imports rose 10 per cent year-on-year, despite a steep fall in shipments from the West Asia amid war.

Government data released on Friday showed imports increased to USD 71.94 billion from USD 65.44 billion a year earlier, while exports stood at USD 43.56 billion. The deficit widened from USD 20.67 billion in March and exceeded market expectations, driven by elevated crude oil prices and global supply disruptions that pushed up import costs.

Imports from the West Asia fell 31.64 per cent to USD 10.47 billion, compared with USD 15.32 billion a year ago, according to Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal. The decline reflects disruptions linked to the Iran conflict and tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, a key global energy route.

India, the world's third-largest crude importer, sources over 80 per cent of its oil from overseas, leaving it vulnerable to global price shocks. Rising crude, freight costs and currency pressures continue to weigh on the external sector.

Authorities have recently introduced measures to conserve foreign exchange reserves, including tighter gold import rules, higher duties on precious metals and appeals for fuel conservation.

Services exports stood at USD 37.24 billion, while services imports were USD 16.66 billion. Total exports rose 13.59 per cent to USD 80.80 billion, while total imports increased 7.67 per cent to USD 88.61 billion.

A trade deficit arises when imports exceed exports, signalling currency pressure, and inflation risks.

A widening gap increases demand for foreign currency, potentially weakening the rupee and raising import costs further. It can also strain foreign exchange reserves, widen the current account deficit, and trigger caution among foreign investors. —*Salar News*

— ANI

Rapido raises $240M from Prosus, others

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

Transport platform Rapido announced that it raised USD 240 million in funding, led by Dutch investment firm Prosus. WestBridge Capital and Accel, among other investors, also participated in the funding round, Rapido said on Friday. With this fresh capital infusion, the company has so far raised USD 730 million in primary and secondary financing. This transaction values the company at USD 3 billion on a post-money basis, Rapido said. This investment is to expand demand by creating new markets and investing in technology, "accelerating our ability to unlock both these structures. We are going deeper into markets where demand exists, but supply remains fragmented, building the density that gives captains reliable, predictable earnings," said Aravind Sanka, Co-founder of Rapido. —*PTI*

'Rs 80 lakh crore needed for urban infra by 2037'

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

India will require nearly Rs 80 lakh crore in urban infrastructure investment by 2037 to support rapid urbanisation and economic growth, according to a report by Brickwork Ratings. The report highlighted that urban areas are expected to contribute nearly 70 per cent of India's GDP by 2036. The Urban Challenge Fund, a Rs 1 lakh crore central government scheme, aims to shift urban financing from grants to market-based funding, potentially generating Rs 4 lakh crore in investment over five years. Urban local bodies must secure at least 50 per cent of funding before receiving central support. The Centre will fund 25 per cent of costs. The report added that credit ratings will become critical for cities to access market financing. —*ANI*

US cases against Adani cannot be reopened

Relief likely over Iran sanctions; hired Trump's lawyer

WASHINGTON DC, 15 MAY

Cases against billionaire industrialist **Gautam Adani** in the US are expected to be dismissed "with prejudice", preventing them from being reopened. The move would mark a significant turnaround in investigations on the Adani Group since 2024.

The Adanis assembled a high-profile legal team led by Robert J Giuffra Jr, senior partner at Sullivan & Cromwell and one of US President Donald Trump's personal lawyers. Lawyers representing the group argued US prosecutors lacked both sufficient evidence and jurisdiction to pursue the matter.

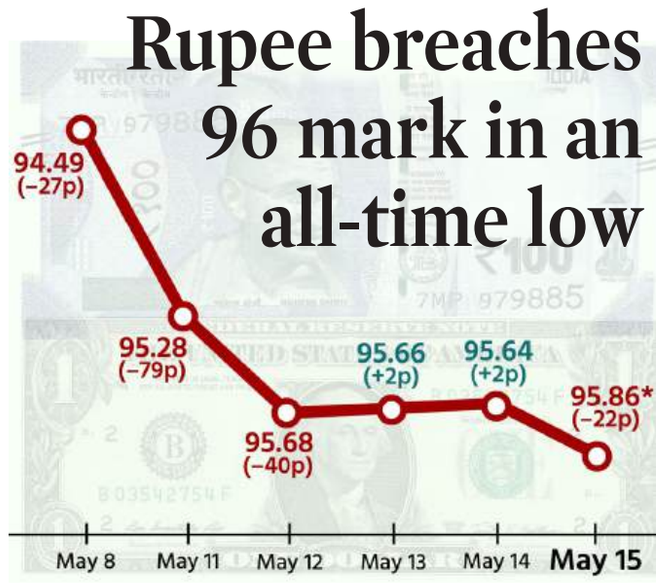
The investigations had triggered debate among legal experts over whether US authorities overreached by applying securities laws to conduct centred largely in India. Former SEC commissioner Laura Unger criticised the government's approach, saying prosecutors had attempted to "shoehorn bribery allegations into a securities fraud case" without an adequate jurisdictional basis under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). The Adanis' legal team maintained there was no credible evidence of bribery and argued the alleged investor disclosures cited by the SEC were not legally actionable.

Separately, a US Treasury Department investigation into possible Iran sanctions violations is also nearing resolution. The matter concerns imports of Iranian LPG by a vessel linked to the group and is expected to be resolved following voluntary disclosures and cooperation with the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Any agreement is likely to involve financial penalties without admissions of wrongdoing.

If finalised, the settlements would remove a major legal overhang for the conglomerate, which has continued expanding across infrastructure, ports, transport and energy. The Adani Group has also continued raising funds from global investors, including BlackRock. Company filings show its listed firms posted record EBITDA. —*PTI*

CLOSES AT 95.86

Rupee breaches 96 mark in an all-time low



MUMBAI, 15 MAY

The Indian rupee crashed to 96.14 against the US dollar on Friday, for the first time ever, closing at an all-time low of 95.86 as elevated crude oil prices and inflation concerns added to the rupee's downside pressure. The dollar index climbed after strong US retail sales and labour market stability scaled back bets on aggressive Federal Reserve rate cuts, trading 0.34 per cent higher.

The rupee has lost over 6 per cent of its value this year, shedding nearly 2 per cent in the past six trading sessions alone as escalating Iran war risks drove crude oil prices higher. Moreover, weak net FDI inflows are likely to exert pressure on the balance of payments, while rising crude oil prices stoke inflation worries.

Forex traders said global uncertainties, relatively high valuations, and the lack of AI-led investment opportunities have weighed on capital flows. Moreover, weak net FDI inflows are likely to exert pressure on the balance of payments, while rising crude oil prices stoke inflation worries.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.86 and fell to 96.14 during intraday trade, a drop of 50 paise from its previous close. It recovered to settle provisionally at 95.86, down 22 paise, likely aided by RBI intervention.

On Thursday, the rupee weakened to a fresh record low of 95.96 before closing with a marginal gain of 2 paise at 95.64 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading up 3.14 per cent at USD 109.04 per barrel in futures trade. —*PTI*

Mkts close lower amid inflation fear

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close lower on Friday, dragged by selling in metal, oil & gas and PSU bank shares as surging crude oil prices kept investors cautious.

After swinging between gains and losses during the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 0.21 per cent or 160.73 points to settle at 75,237.99. Meanwhile, the 50-share NSE Nifty settled lower by 0.19 per cent or 46.10 points to 23,643.50, snapping its two-day gaining streak.

Among Sensex stocks, Tata Steel, State Bank of India, Eternal, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Larsen & Toubro, Trent, Axis Bank and Asian Paints were the major laggards. While Infosys, Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid, Adani Ports, Maruti Suzuki India, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Hindustan Unilever, and Sun Pharmaceuticals were winners.

Among the sectoral indices, Metal declined the most by 1.98 per cent, followed by Realty at 1.82 per cent, PSU Bank at 1.80 per cent, Oil & Gas at 1.79 per cent, Commodities at 1.31 per cent, Energy at 1.13 per cent, and Capital Goods, which fell by 1 per cent. On the other hand, IT, FMCG, Healthcare, Telecommunication, and Services were the gainers.

On the BSE, 2,471 stocks declined while 1,705 advanced, and 169 remained unchanged. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies dropped by Rs 2.26 lakh crore to Rs 460.5 lakh crore. —*PTI*

Andhra to get Rs 16,000 crore combat aircraft infra

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at Sri Sathya Sai district in Andhra Pradesh —*PTI*

PUTTAPARTHI, 15 MAY

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday laid the foundation stone for a Rs 16,000 crore Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) infrastructure project in Andhra Pradesh's Sri Sathya Sai district, terming the porject a milestone in India's defence history.

Singh said the Puttaparthi project, being developed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), will build an aircraft integration and advanced flight-testing centre.

This kind of facility, possessed by only a handful of countries, will support the development of the fifth-generation AMCA fighter jet.

- The Rs 16,000 crore Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft project in Andhra Pradesh is expected to generate 7,500 jobs, an official release stated on Friday.

Singh said Bharat Dynamics Limited will manufacture advanced autonomous underwater systems, torpedoes and countermeasure systems with an investment of Rs 480 crore.

He further said Agneyastra, a subsidiary of Bharat Forge, would manufacture advanced weapon systems for future warfare needs with an investment of Rs 1,500 crore, while HFCL would establish electrical fuse manufacturing facilities with an investment of Rs 1,294 crore.

Singh added that eight drone firms are jointly setting up a Drone City in Kurnool under the Make in India initiative, calling drones a game-changer in warfare.

Singh noted that several defence systems earlier imported would now be manufactured domestically.

Despite this progress, the minister acknowledged that India still depends on other countries for key defence needs. —*PTI*

India's forex reserves jump by USD 6.2B to USD 696.9B

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

India's forex reserves increased by USD 6.295 billion to USD 696.988 billion as of 8 May, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The previous week had seen reserves decline by USD 7.794 billion to USD 690.693 billion.

The reserves had peaked at an all-time high of USD 728.494 billion during the week ending 27 February, before declining due to the Middle East crisis, which pressured the rupee and prompted RBI intervention through dollar sales.

For the week ending 8 May, foreign currency assets, a key component, grew by USD 562 million to USD 552.387 billion. These assets include the effects of currency appreciation or depreciation of the euro, pound, and yen.

Gold reserves increased by USD 5.637 billion to USD 120.853 billion, while Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) rose by USD 84 million to USD 18.873 billion. The RBI also reported a USD 12 million increase in India's reserve position with the IMF, reaching USD 4.875 billion. —PTI

'Sugar export ban will trigger price crash'

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

West Indian Sugar Mills Association criticised the Centre's sugar export ban until 30 September, warning it could crash domestic prices, deepen factory debts, and harm cultivators.

Association President Bhairavnath Thombre said prices were already falling, making it harder for mills to clear Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) dues.

Thombre added that this threatens India's exports to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Gulf countries. Thombre explained that Maharashtra's sugar factories owe Rs 1,550 crore in FRP debts, Rs 12,000 crore owed nationwide.

"Sugarcane cultivation may not decrease, but cultivators will not earn enough from their yield.... the ban will tarnish the image of Indian sugar factories in the global market," he said.

The ban aims to boost domestic supply and stabilise prices amid inflation concerns stemming from the West Asia conflict. —*PTI*

M'rashtra reduces ATF VAT to 7 pc

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

Maharashtra's government has cut VAT on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) from 18 to 7 per cent, to provide relief amid rising operational costs due to the West Asia crisis.

ATF costs, which accounts for roughly 40 per cent of airline expenses, have surged due to volatile crude prices.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu praised the "timely intervention".

The VAT reduction is expected to improve competitiveness of Maharashtra's airports and to encourage similar measures in neighbouring states. —*ANI*

Gold and silver prices drop amid global uncertainty

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Gold declined by Rs 2,880, or 1.78 per cent, to Rs 1.59 lakh per 10 grams on Friday. Caused by a strong US dollar, high crude prices, and uncertainty of interest rate cuts.

Internationally, Comex gold for June fell 2.41 per cent, to USD 4,572.55 per ounce. Rising oil prices, geopolitical tensions and vessel seizures weighed on sentiment.

Meanwhile, silver futures dropped nearly 6 per cent: Rs 16,352 to Rs 2.74 lakh per kilogram, with July contracts tumbling Rs 16,352, or 5.62 per cent. Comex silver for July fell USD 6.42, or 7.52 per cent, to USD 78.90 an ounce.

Analysts highlighted a stronger dollar, rising US Treasury yields, and geopolitical concerns. —*PTI*

SUBSTANDARD PRODUCE

Blinkit hit with FSSAI notice for 'bad eggs'

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

FSSAI has sent a notice to Blinkit Commerce Private Limited based on complaints over the sale of alleged sub-standard eggs being sold through the popular e-commerce mobile app platform, sources said on Friday.

FSSAI has taken cognisance of the complaints circulating on social media platforms regarding the quality of eggs being sold through Blinkit.

Complaints said the eggs are smelly, rubbery in texture and behave like plastic, rendering them unfit for human consumption.

Blinkit has been directed to explain, sources said.

The Eternal-owned company has been directed to submit a comprehensive Action Taken Report (ATR), including a compliance report regarding the responsibilities of E-commerce Food Business Operators, within seven days from the issuance of the letter.

Blinkit has been directed to submit a report on its responsibilities as an e-commerce food business operator, within seven days —*BLINKIT*

In case of failure to comply, the sources said, FSSAI would initiate action as per the FSS Act 2006. Blinkit has not commented on the notice so far.

Blinkit, a part of Eternal, is a leading Indian quick-commerce (q-commerce) platform that delivers groceries, fresh vegetables, electronics, and everyday essentials directly to customers in 10 to 20 minutes.

Originally founded as Grofers in 2013, it rebranded to Blinkit in 2021 and was acquired by Zomato in 2022.

At the time of filing this report, Eternal is trading at Rs 241.98, down by Rs 3.84 or -1.56 per cent. —*ANI*

Goyal, Egypt minister hold talks to boost economic ties

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Badr Abdelatty to explore new avenues for mutual growth. Goyal highlighted efforts to deepen India-Egypt economic cooperation through trade, investment, connectivity, infrastructure, and business engagement.

"Discussions focused on sectors such as pharmaceuticals, energy, logistics, digitisation, AI, tourism, and manufacturing, reaffirming our shared commitment to expanding the strategic partnership," said Goyal

Earlier, Goyal engaged with German leaders to strengthen India-Germany relations and the India-EU trade partnership. He said, "Discussions aimed at enhancing investment flows, business environment, and collaboration across sectors like textiles, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, mobility, and manufacturing."

Union Minister Piyush Goyal with Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Badr Abdelatty in Delhi —*PTI*

Both sides recognised the importance of expanding trade, fostering innovation, and building resilient supply chains through closer partnerships and industry engagement, Goyal added. —*ANI*

IPL 2026 viewership scales up in digital space

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

The watch-time of the ongoing Indian Premier League has increased by seven per cent in the digital space, while the TV viewership is on course to hit the 500 million mark, according to the event's broadcasters.

The overall digital reach of the IPL has grown by 15 per cent, 'JioStar' stated in a press release.

The data is for 51 matches on Linear TV and 57 games on the digital platform.

"CTV has seen a 25 per cent growth in reach, with watch-time up by 20 per cent. The regional language watch-time has seen a staggering uptick of 42 per cent," the company claimed.

"The competitive intensity has driven a week-on-week climb in reach.—*PTI*

Rachin leaves KKR for England tour preparations

KOLKATA, 15 MAY

Kolkata Knight Riders all-rounder Rachin Ravindra has left the IPL to begin preparations for New Zealand's upcoming Test tour of England, the franchise said in a squad update on the eve of their home match against Gujarat Titans. "Rachin Ravindra has returned home to begin his red-ball preparations for New Zealand's upcoming Test tour to England," KKR stated on Friday.

KKR face the Gujarat Titans at Eden Gardens here on Saturday. Bought by KKR at his base price of Rs 2 crore in the IPL 2026 auction, Ravindra thus returned home without playing a single match this season, with his new franchise preferring marquee signing Cameroon Green as their go-to all-rounder..—*PTI*

Ishan Kishan gets ₹ 1 cr cheque, T20 World Cup heroics

PATNA, 15 MAY

Bihar Chief Minister on Friday handed over a cheque of Rs 1 crore to cricketer Ishan Kishan for his contribution in winning the 2026 T20 World Cup. Kishan, who has his roots in Nawada district of the state and had spent his early childhood in Patna, called on the chief minister at his office.

The 27-year-old wicket-keeper batsman received a warm welcome from Choudhary, who placed a stole around Kishan's neck and presented him with a memento before handing over the cheque.

"Member of the Indian cricket team which won the ICC T20 World Cup 2026.—*PTI*

-PTI

Scheffler is part of 7-way tie for lead at PGA C'ship

NEWTOWN SQUARE, 15 MAY

Scottie Scheffler missed a 4-foot putt and laughed. Jon Rahm angrily swung his club after an errant shot, and the grass divot hit a volunteer in the face. Garrick Higgo was 10 seconds late to the first tee and penalised two shots before he even swung a club. Aronimink waited 64 years to host another PGA Championship and made up for lost time in a big way Thursday, including the biggest logjam in a major championship since 1969. When the long day was over, the most predictable was seeing Scheffler's name atop the leaderboard at 3-under 67, along with six other players. Another surprise: It's the first time the world's No. 1 player has at least a share of the lead after 18 holes of a major.—*PTI*

KKR fight to stay alive as GT eye top-two finish

KKR's defeat, however, would virtually end their campaign in IPL 2026

KOLKATA, 15 MAY

Back home after nearly a month on the road and with their campaign hanging by a thread, Kolkata Knight Riders will look to stay alive in the IPL when they face a rampaging Gujarat Titans side chasing a top-two finish, here on Saturday.

It has been another inconsistent and underwhelming season for KKR under veteran Ajinkya Rahane, whose appointment as captain itself had raised questions after the franchise finished a disappointing eighth under him last year.

KKR had to wait till their seventh match (halfway stage) of the season to register their first win and have looked far from a settled side throughout the campaign, with questionable team selections and batting order hurting their rhythm.

KKR now has three matches remaining and can reach a maximum of 15 points if they win all of them, but even that may not guarantee a playoff berth as qualification would then depend on other results.

Another defeat, however, would virtually end their campaign and could also intensify scrutiny on Rahane's future with the franchise.

KKR VS GT @ Eden Gardens in Kolkata
7.30 pm IST

Their four-match winning run was built largely around the return to form of spin twins Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, along with consistent contributions from vice-captain Rinku Singh.

But Chakravarthy's absence against RCB because of a fractured left leg proved costly.

There is some relief for KKR, though, with head coach Abhishek Nayar hinting at the spinner's return.

Youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi has been one of the few bright spots with 340 runs, including four fifties, at a strike rate of 139.44, while Rinku has scored 286 runs at 148.95 with two half-centuries.

Hardik will be back for KKR game: Shardul

Mumbai Indians all-rounder Shardul Thakur clarified that skipper Hardik Pandya's absence in the last three matches was due to injury, adding that he could return for their next game against Kolkata Knight Riders while dismissing speculation over the star's future with the franchise.

Pandya did not travel to Dharamsala for MI's six-wicket win over Punjab Kings, where Jasprit Bumrah became the team's third captain this season after Suryakumar Yadav also missed the game following the birth of his child. —*PTI*

WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE PRESSURE: HADDIN

DHARAMSALA, 15 MAY

Punjab Kings assistant coach Brad Haddin admitted that his side has struggled to cope with pressure after it suffered a fifth successive defeat to continue a stunning mid-season slump in the ongoing Indian Premier League.

PBKS' latest loss came against the Mumbai Indians, who emerged winners by six wickets in a last-ball thriller in the hill town on Thursday night. "We have just not been able to handle pressure in the last few defeats. We have not played our best cricket when we need to, which has been disappointing," Haddin said in the post-match press conference. "We are as disappointed as you guys are with the way we started the tournament and where we are now. There is no hiding that we've got to play better."

Pollard fined for using abusive language for fourth umpire

Mumbai Indians' batting coach Kieron Pollard has been fined 15 per cent of his applicable match fee for breaching the IPL's code of conduct by using abusive language for the fourth umpire.

The incident took place during MI's match against Punjab Kings here on Thursday night, in which the former emerged winners by six wickets in a last-ball thriller in the hill town.

"Kieron Pollard, Batting Coach, Mumbai Indians, has been fined 15% of his applicable match fee and accumulated one demerit point for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code of Conduct for Players and Team officials," the IPL said in a press release issued on Friday morning. —*PTI*

Delhi FC crowned I-League 2 champions, promoted to IFL

KALYANI, 15 MAY

Delhi Football Club on Friday clinched the I-League 2 title and secured promotion to the higher-tier Indian Football League (IFL) after playing out a 1-1 draw against United SC here.

FC Bengaluru United also became the second side to be promoted to IFL after playing out an identical 1-1 draw with GMSC, Mumbai in Mumbai. GMSC avoided relegation from the I-League 2 with the draw.

IFL is the second-tier club competition in the country after the Indian Super League.

At the Kalyani Stadium,

Delhi FC are I-League 2 Champions and are promoted to IFL along with FC Bengaluru United -IFL

Delhi FC rallied from a goal down to take a crucial one point. United Sports Club took the lead in the 54th minute through Susovan Ghosh before Himanshu Jangra found the equaliser in the 67th minute to hand one point to Delhi SC.

At the Neville D'Souza Ground in Mumbai, FC Bengaluru United went ahead in the fourth minute, which was, however, cancelled by GMSC through a 47th-minute strike from GMSC's Shravan Shetty.

FC Bengaluru United and United SC both finished the season on 15 points, but the Bengaluru outfit secured promotion courtesy of goal difference, while United SC's wait for a return to the second tier extended to 12 years. —*PTI*

SUPER CHESS CLASSIC ROMANIA

Praggnanandhaa draws with Alireza Firouzja in opener

BUCHAREST, 15 MAY

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa survived a small scare before settling for a draw with Alireza Firouzja of France in the first round of the Super Chess Classic, the first Classical event of the Grand Chess Tour, in Bucharest, Romania.

It turned out to be an exciting affair after a dull Queen's Gambit declined by Firouzja as black. As many as three minor pieces changed hands early, and it looked like the game was headed towards a dull draw when Praggnanandhaa went for the complexities by allowing black to have connected passed pawns on the queen side in exchange for a strong centre.

The Iranian-turned-French found some excellent resources in the middle game and was able to nearly rip apart the Indian's king side, but the position was so complicated that it was nearly impossible to find all the best moves for the human brain. —*PTI*

-X/@KSLTATENNIS

Smith to face Sekulic in K'taka Open final

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Bengaluru teenager Kriish Tyagi's inspiring run at the Karnataka Open ATP Challenger men's singles event ended in the semifinals as he lost to Australia's Philip Sekulic here on Friday.

Sekulic will face top seed American Keegan Smith, who defeated Ilya Ivashka of Belarus in the other semifinal.

All eyes were on the 19-year-old wild card entrant Kriish after his stunning quarterfinal upset over World No. 328 and second seed Hamish Stewart. But against the experienced fourth seed Sekulic, Krish found the challenge a step too far, going down 0-6, 2-6. The scoreline, however, did not fully reflect the fight the Bengaluru youngster displayed in patches during the semifinal. Sekulic broke the Indian's serve in the second, fourth, and sixth games to complete a one-sided 6-0 opening set, using his depth and precision to deny Krish opportunities to dictate with his forehand. —*PTI*

Lovlina, Sakshi, Jadumani to represent India at CWG, Asian Games

PATIALA, 15 MAY

Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain, giant-killer Sakshi Chaudhary, Jadumani Singh, and Narender Berwal headlined the final day of selection trials here on Friday as the boxers sealed their spots for the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games amid fierce competition and weight-category reshuffles.

Joining them on the plane to Glasgow and Japan will be world championship bronze medallist Parveen Hooda (65kg), Sumit Kundu (70kg), Ankush (80kg), and Kapil Pokhariya (90kg), all of whom emerged triumphant in their respective finals.

Reigning national champion Aditya Pratap Singh (65kg), meanwhile, booked his place only for the Commonwealth Games scheduled to be held in Glasgow in July-August.

The Asian Games will be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, in September-October.

The trials were marked by weight-category switches as boxers tried to fit into the limited weight classes.

In what was arguably the marquee clash of the day, two-time youth world champion Sakshi produced another clinical display to blank reigning 48kg world champion Minakshi Hooda 5-0 and clinch the 51kg spot. —*PTI*

Elina Svitolina sets up final date with Coco Gauff

ROME, 15 MAY

Elina Svitolina is one step closer to a third Italian Open crown after securing a 6-4, 2-6, 6-2 victory over the fourth-seeded Iga Swiatek in Thursday's semifinal. The seventh-seeded Svitolina's path to victory was defined by her defensive tenacity, as she successfully fended off 11 of 16 break points throughout the contest. While Swiatek's aggressive play resulted in 50 unforced errors, Svitolina capitalised on those mistakes to seize control in the deciding set and dismantle the Pole's rhythm.

Svitolina will face third-seeded Coco Gauff in Saturday's title match. The American notched a 6-4, 6-3 victory over 26th-seeded Sorana Cirstea of Romania. Svitolina won the title in Rome in both 2017 and 2018. —*PTI*

Sindhu out of Thailand Open

BANGKOK, 15 MAY

Indian badminton ace PV Sindhu squandered a one-game advantage to go down fighting to top seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in the quarterfinals of the Thailand Open tournament here on Friday.

Sindhu lost 21-19, 18-21, 15-21 to world number three Yamaguchi in the women's singles quarterfinal match that lasted just over one hour in the USD 500,000 Super 500 tournament. Despite the loss, world number 12 Sindhu leads the head-to-head record against Yamaguchi 15-13. In the Malaysia Open Super 1000 tournament in January, Sindhu had prevailed after Yamaguchi retired from their quarterfinal game due to an injury. The first game on Friday was a neck-and-neck affair with one player ahead by just one point till 11-11. After that, Yamaguchi was 13-11 ahead, but Sindhu rallied to level the scores. After they were 19-19, Sindhu pocketed the next two points to take the first game. Sindhu was 5-1 ahead, and it looked like she would carry the momentum, but she let her arch-rival come back and level the scores at 11-11. From 7-11, Yamaguchi took seven straight points to go up 14-11. By then, the momentum had shifted to Yamaguchi, and she took the game 21-18. In the decider, Sindhu was not in her elements as she trailed all through. From trailing 0-5, the Indian narrowed the gap to 11-12, but Yamaguchi then switched gears to take the decider 21-15 and win the match. —*PTI*

REAL MADRID BEAT OVIEDO

Kylian Mbappe whistled at Bernabeu

LONDON, 15 MAY

Real Madrid star Kylian Mbappe was whistled by fans at the Santiago Bernabeu in his team's 2-0 win over Real Oviedo on Thursday night in La Liga. The Frenchman returned from a thigh injury as a substitute for Los Blancos, who will finish a second straight season without a major trophy after Barcelona were crowned league champions last week. Madrid, without Mbappe, lost the Clasico at Camp Nou on Sunday to confirm Hansi Flick's side as title winners. Their top goalscorer Mbappe, has come in for heavy criticism from the club's fans in recent weeks for a perceived lack of commitment to the cause.

Gonzalo Garcia opened the scoring for second-place Madrid before half-time, and Jude Bellingham added the second in a routine victory over relegated Oviedo at a stadium with thousands of empty seats.

"The whistles... that's life, you can't change the opinion of the people when they are angry," Mbappe told reporters.

"It's the life of a Real Madrid player and a famous player like me.

"Footballers don't always have to understand, they have to accept and look forward and change the situation."

Mbappe targeted

Arbeloa sent on Mbappe, who was whistled by Madrid's fans, particularly unhappy at his recent holiday to Sardinia while recovering from injury.

Mbappe, who scored 41 goals in 41 games across all competitions this season before this game, tried his best to shrug it off. The striker had a couple of shots off-target and another blocked.

Many Los Blancos players have been jeered by Madrid supporters over the years, including Mbappe's idol Cristiano Ronaldo.

Madrid president Florentino Perez this week called elections during a tumultuous period for the club. —*PTI*

Shakira and Burna Boy combine for official WC song

NEW YORK, 15 MAY

The Colombian superstar Shakira and Afrobeats icon Burna Boy have teamed up for 'Dai Dai,' the official song for the 2026 FIFA World Cup on Friday.

"Dai Dai brings together the global sounds and energy of Shakira and Burna Boy in a vibrant celebration of football, culture, and unity," FIFA said.

In early May, Colombian singer Shakira foreshadowed Friday's news by sharing a minute-long teaser clip of a new song, writing on social media: "From Maracaná Stadium, here is 'Dai Dai,' the FIFA World Cup Official Song 2026."

FIFA said royalties from the song, which is available on major streaming platforms, will support the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund.

On Thursday, FIFA announced that the final on 19 July in New Jersey will feature a star-studded halftime show headlined by Madonna, Shakira and boy band BTS. The World Cup will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico and begins in June. —*PTI*